A FREE

DISCOURSE

AGAINST

Customary Swearing.

AND

A DISSUASIVE

FROM

CURSING.

By the late Honourable

ROBERT BOYLE.

Published by *John Williams*, D. D.

LONDON:

Printed by *R. R.* for *Thomas Cockerill*, Senr and Junr, at the *Three Legs* in the *Poultrey*, over-against *Stocks-Market*. MDCXCV.

The Hon.ble Robert Boyle.

London Printed for Tho: Cockerill at ye 3 Leggs in ye Poultry.

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IMPRIMATUR.

April 13.
1695.

Guil. Lancaster.

'61-76,7

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To the Right Honourable

RICHARD

Earl of *Burlington* and *Cork*,
Lord High Treaſurer of *Ireland*.

AND

The HONOURABLE

Sir *Henry Aſhhurſt*, Baronet;

Executors to the Honourable
Robert Boyle, Eſquire.

IT has been an Injury too often done to the Memory of Perſons eminent for Knowledge, Learn-

Learning, and Virtue, to have after their Death ſuch Works obtruded upon the World for theirs, as have been deſervedly ſuſpected; or if theirs, yet were never intended by them in that ſqualid, broken, and imperfect condition, to have been publiſhed. But as for this Tract you were pleaſed to put into my hands to peruſe, it is not only certain that it was Wrote by the Honourable Perſon whoſe Name it bears; but alſo

alſo that it was deſigned by him for the Preſs; as ſome Paſſages in it do apparently ſhew.

And if this Noble and Learned Author thought it ſeaſonable for thoſe Times of Uncontroul'd Liberty and Confuſion in which it was wrote, it is as ſeaſonable, if not more, at the preſent; when that Vice againſt which it is directed, has of late Years ſo far prevail'd, to the great Diſhonour of our Nation, as well as our Religion, that the Patriots of our *Anno* 1647.

Countrey aſſembled in Parliament, have been thereby juſtly provok'd to prepare that late Bill (which ſince has paſs'd the Royal Aſſent) for the better and more effectual Puniſhment and Suppreſſion of it. A Deſign becoming ſo Auguſt an Aſſembly; and in the Proſecution of which your Honours muſt be eſteemed to have done conſiderable Service, eſpecially by the Publication of this Treatiſe, which has been ſo happily recovered,

and

and by a ſingular Providence reſerved, as it were, for ſuch a ſpecial Seaſon and Service.

I am,

Moſt Honoured,

Your moſt Humble and Faithful Servant,

JOHN WILLIAMS.

THE PUBLISHER TO THE READER.

THESE *Two Tracts against* Cuſtomary Swearing *and* Curſing, *lately met with amongſt the Papers of a Perſon of Quality, and an intimate Acquaintance of the Honourable Mr.* Robert Boyle, *Tranſcribed by his own Hand; were found upon Peruſal, Perfect*

fect and Fitted for the Preſs; except the Cloſe of a Dedicatory Epiſtle to his Noble Siſter, the Counteſs of Kildare, *which (as far as appears by the Copy) he had but juſt begun.*

The Year inſerted on the Title Page, as well as a paſſage or two in the former of theſe, ſhews that it was Penned toward the latter end of the late Unhappy Times, when he was about Twenty Years Old; by which time (if I am not miſtaken) this was the Third Treatiſe he had prepared for the Publick;

lick; the other Two being that of Seraphick Love, *afterwards Printed, and* An Eſſay of Miſtaken Modeſty, *referred to in this.*

I cannot ſay (though there is a ſenſible Conformity between the Style of theſe and others of his Books) but that this Honourable Author, if he had been to write upon this Argument in his Riper Years, might have given it a finer Turn; and added, out of his vaſt ſtore of Learning and Thought, much to the weight and force of it. But there is in the management of

it,

it, such a strain of Modesty and unaffected Piety, such an affectionate Zeal for the Honour of Almighty God, and such a passionate concernment for the Well-doing and Happiness of those of his Acquaintance, for whose use this seems more especially designed; and in fine, so much Truth, Reason, and Observation (as the Pleas *and* Excuses *here undertaken and answered shew) that must above all recommend it to such as have his Name in Remembrance and Veneration.*

A Name,

To the Reader.

A Name, methinks, better than that of Sons and of Daughters, than that of Blood and Deſcent; and that ſhould provoke thoſe of Eminent Extraction and Station, to an Imitation of ſo Worthy and Glorious an Example.

What happy Inſtruments might they then be of Good to Mankind, by their wiſe Conduct and their exemplary Vertues! What a reſtraint would this lay, above that of Laws, on their Dependants and Inferiors! For how would ſuch dare to offend, that are ſure to find no Countenance or Protection?

tection? And what Protection or Countenance could they expect from their Superiors, whose Lives would be a continual Reproof, and where they could find no more a President, than they do a Law to encourage them in their wicked Oaths and Blasphemies. To bring these Vices into disparagement, and to represent the Folly, as well as the Sin of them to the better-bred part of Mankind, was the Generous and Pious Design of this Learned Author; and of those Honourable Persons, that from their Relation to him by Blood or Friendship, have

have been concerned in the Publication.

Toward the utter Extermination of which amongst us, there seems to be, as human means, nothing more necessary than the Vigilance of our Magistrates, who are now as well and fully Empowered, as obliged by the Law to see to the Punishment of it; and for the due Execution of which, they will most certainly have the good Wishes, Assistance, and Prayers of all Good men; and which is more than all, the Blessing and Rewards of Heaven.

I have

To the Reader.

I have only this to add, That the Second Tract, or Letter, seems to proceed from the same Hand with the First, being agreeable to it in the Stile as well as the Design of it; and so the Naming Mr. Boyle *in it, is but a decent Cover for the Concealment of himself.*

A DIS-

A DISCOURSE Against Customary SWEARING.

THOUGH I doubt not but that it is much more easy to make most Swearers Proselytes than Converts, and a Task of less Difficulty to convince their Judgments, than to reform their Practice; yet that they may not have any colour to father upon Ignorance what is usually the Child of some much guiltier Pa-

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rent, it will be (poſſibly) no leſs uſeful than neceſſary, briefly to direct them to thoſe Texts of Scripture, where all thoſe that acknowledge God's Word, may find the Condemnation of that Vice.

Firſt then, the Third Commandment flatly forbids unneceſſary Oaths, in terms that are ratified by theſe words of our Redeemer, in St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel; Mat. 5. 33, 34. *Ye have heard what hath been ſaid by them of old time, Thou ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf, but ſhalt perform unto the Lord thy oaths: But I ſay unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the* V. 37. *earth*, &c. And a little under, *But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatſoever is more than theſe cometh of evil.* The Sum of which Prohibition is thus repeated by St. *James*, towards the cloſe of his Catho-

Catholick Epiſtle; *But above all things, my brethren, ſwear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath, but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay, leſt you fall into condemnation.* And ſuitable to theſe clear Paſſages of both Teſtaments, the Wiſeman characters a Sinner by him that *ſweareth*; and paraphraſeth a Righteous man by him that *feareth an oath.* So in *Hoſea*, Swearing has the Van of the moſt crying and provoking Sins, in that ſame diſmal paſſage; *By ſwearing, and lying, and killing, and ſtealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood: Therefore ſhall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein ſhall languiſh, with the beaſts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fiſhes of the ſea alſo ſhall be taken away.* And in another Prophet we find this Threat

James 5. 12.

Eccl. 9. 2.

Hoſ. 4. 2, 3.

Zech. 5. 3. recorded; *And every one that ſweareth ſhall be cut off.* Which Paſſages might eaſily be reinforced with others of the ſame nature, if I did not think theſe that are already alledged, abundantly ſufficient; where we pay not our Faith to the Number of the Texts, but to the Authority of the Inditer.

But alas! how much more eaſy is it to make men condemn their Sins, than to perſuade them to forſake them? Certainly our Underſtandings are (uſually) much honeſter than our Wills; it being far eaſier to reconcile mens Judgments to the Truth, than their Practice to their Judgment. Cuſtomary and unneceſſary Swearing (for that's the ſole Enemy I undertake) is ſo confeſſedly unlawful, that they are aſhamed to defend it, that bluſh not to practice

ctice it; and even they renounce it in their Opinions, that moſt cheriſh it in their Diſcourſe. But methinks this knowledge of the ill they act, ſhould make them apprehend that Menace of our Saviour, which he threatens, *He that knoweth his maſter's will, and doth it not, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes*: For ſtumbles are more pardonable by Night than by day; and the knowledge of what we do, whilſt it lends us direction, robs us of excuſe; and if it do not impede, it aggravates our faults; ſince he that does what he condemns, condemns what he does. Upon which ſcore our Bleſſed Saviour ſaid, That *Tyre and Sidon ſhould* feel a milder Torment at *the day of judgment*, than thoſe ungrateful Towns *Chorazin* and *Bethſaida*, where the light of his Do-

Luke 12. 47.

Matt. 11. 21, 22.

ctrine had ſhone ſo clearly, and the Miracles of his Life had been ſo familiar. And accordingly, we may obſerve, That the Devils that had no Tempter to their Fall, have found no Pardon for it; but having ſinn'd againſt ſo clear a light, are hopeleſly *reſerv'd in chains of utter darkneſs*, to endure hideous Torments unto all Eternity.

SECT. I.

BUT that we may leave our Swearer as little Pretence as Reaſon for his Obſtinacy, let us ſingly and orderly examine his Allegations, and tear off thoſe Fig-leaves of Evaſions and Excuſes the Devil teaches him to ſow together, to hide his own Deformity from himſelf.

PLEA

PLEA I.

Amongſt theſe, the firſt Allegation we are to remove, is this, That Swearing is indeed a Sin, but that (as *Lot* ſaid of *Zoar*) it is but a *little one*, for were it of the blacker Dye, in what a ſad condition were mankind, ſince the number of Swearers is not inferior to that of Men. Gen. 19. 20.

Anſwer. But certainly he that ſeriouſly conſiders whom the leaſt ſin offends, and what it merits; how Infinite a Juſtice, Majeſty, and Goodneſs, it provokes, and how intolerable and immortal a Puniſhment is due unto it, will eaſily concede, That to believe any Sin otherwiſe than comparatively little, is in it ſelf an Error abſolutely great; for the moſt

dwarfiſh are to be called ſmall, but in the ſenſe that the *Aſtronomers* call the Earth a Point; for ſo indeed it is, compar'd to the Firmament; but in it ſelf conſidered, 'tis ſo vaſt, that the Spots and Shreds of it are both the Stage and the Subjects of the Ambition of Conquerors, and the Jars of Monarchs. And truly, ſince the leaſt (unpardon'd) Sin is ſufficient to damn us, methinks we ſhould as little ſlight petty Faults, becauſe there are fouler Crimes, as we do Piſtols now there are Cannons uſed. But granting this Aſſertion to be true in the general, it will forfeit that Attribute in this Application; for this Sin is one of thoſe that are expreſly and by name forbidden in the Ten Commandments; where it is not only liſted among, but has the Precedency

Exod. 20. 7.

dency of Murther, Theft, and of Adultery; being the ſole Commandment (ſave one) that has a Threat annexed to the Law; which in this paſſage is, *For the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain.* In which laſt words, the great Lawgiver foreſeeing men would be very remiſs in the proſecution of a Fault, in which their want of Zealous Piety makes them not to be concern'd, declares that he himſelf will take the Vindication of his Honour into his own hands, and inflict himſelf the Puniſhment of a Crime, that fears it but from Him. And then if thoſe Treſpaſſes be not ſeverely dealt with, that are alone puniſhable by the Supreme Magiſtrate, let all conſider what *a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.* Heb. 10. 31.

Which

Which brings into my mind a pretty Extravagancy that is reported of the *Turkiſh* Laws; which puniſh Blaſphemy (as they call it) againſt *Mahomet* with inevitable Death, but enact no Penalty upon the like diſhonour offer'd to God. Becauſe *Mahomet* (ſay they) is not in a condition to vindicate himſelf; but God is ever able to revenge his own Affronts, and therefore they reſign that care to Him. Who indeed many times has (in ſuch caſes) done it ſo ſoundly, and ſo much to the purpoſe, that thoſe ſawcy Wretches have had cauſe to think it as poor a Privilege to have their Oaths out of the cognizance of the Laws of men, as thieving Beggars do to be exempted from the danger of the Beadle and the Stocks, becauſe their Crimes are reſerved for the Gallows. But

But to reſume our Proofs of the Sinfulneſs of Swearing: Admit the Guilt of Single Oaths were no leſs venial than is pretended; yet certainly, when in moſt Swearers the frequency of ſwearing is ſo great, that one day may be guilty of more than a Thouſand Oaths; (theſe Sins not growing ſingle, as Apples or Cherries, but like Grapes by cluſters; the Swearer's Devil having a title to the name of the *Gadarene* Spirit, that, anſwering our Saviour, called himſelf Legion) their Multitude cannot but render them conſiderable: And he that remembers that a Thouſand Holes may as well ſink a Ship, as ſome great Leaks, will conclude Oaths to be extremely dangerous, at leaſt for their Number, tho they were not ſo for their Heinouſneſs. Nor are Mark 5.9.

are they only ruinous to the Perſons that uſe them, but have a deſtructive Influence upon that State that ſuffers them. For whether or no what the Prophet related once of *Judah*, *Becauſe of ſwearing*, Jer. 23.10: *the land mourneth*, be not a fulfilled Prophecy of *England*, I wiſh it were rather Charity than Partiality to doubt. For tho the multitude and variety of our Sins be ſo great, that 'tis a puzzling Task to determine to what particular Crimes our Calamities are due, yet certainly our Oaths are too conſiderable an acceſſion to our ſins, not to infuſe a ſuitable proportion of Gall and Wormwood into that bitter Cup (of Affliction) theſe gaſping Kingdoms drink ſo deeply of; and whatſoever feather'd, I am confident our Oaths have ſtrangely pointed thoſe

thoſe fatal Arrows that deſtroy theſe Nations.

As for the ſuppoſal this Miſtake is built on (the Involvedneſs of all men in the Guilt of Swearing) it is as weak as 'tis uncharitable; for (beſides that to allow no body an Innocence from ſwearing, is as much a Slander to mankind in its preſent condition, as it would be its Crime if the accuſation were true) our Saviour gives us the World's Example rather for a Caution, than for Imitation: Where he tells us, That the Way to Hell is a Road, and throng'd with Numerous Travellers; but Heaven's Path is narrow, and the Gate that inlets to thoſe Manſions of Bliſs, as unfrequented as 'tis ſtrait. Even *Mahomet* himſelf (in his diſcourſe with the Jew *Adia*) having at the Laſt Day divided Man- Mat. 7.13.

Mankind into Threeſcore Troops, makes but Three of them Believers, and all the reſt Reprobates. But certainly he whoſe Command this is, *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil*, will hardly take the Practice of that Multitude for a juſt diſpenſation of the Law of that God, who having commanded us to live by Good Precepts, will ſcarce accept it for an Excuſe, that we have err'd by Bad Examples. 'Twould be a ſtrange abſurdity in Phyſick, becauſe a Peſtilence is more diſpers'd and epidemical, to think it therefore the leſs dangerous; or to believe that the Multitude of ſtinking Carkaſſes can leſſen the Noiſomneſs of the Stench. But as in Pious Duties the general Concurrence contributes to the acceptation; ſo in Sins, the like Conſent but haſtens on

Exod. 23. 2.

on Revenge: It being with the guilty Kingdoms as with leaking Boats, where the Number of the Paſſengers but makes them ſink more nimbly. And accordingly we read, that the Univerſality of the *Sodomites* Beaſtlineſs was ſo far from juſtifying each ſingle ſinner, that they were all conſum'd with Fire from Heaven, for the ſole want of Ten Righteous Perſons. Gen. 18. 32.

'Tis for them only that think it no miſery to burn in Hell with others, to fancy it no ſin to ſwear with Company: But for the reſt of men, let them take this from me, that Sins whoſe ſeeming Pettineſs makes them leſs formidable, do oftentimes prove the moſt dangerous; and he that dares eſteem any Sin ſmall, may ſoon be brought to think none great.

PLEA

PLEA II.

Well, but objects the Swearer, I do not ſwear ſo often, and my Conſcience by ſeldom accuſing me of that Sin, aſſures me that I do but unfrequently commit it.

Anſw. But ſure in Vice, whoſe Eſſence conſiſts in a repugnance to Mediocrity, every little is too much; and he that ſwears feweſt Oaths, ſwears yet too many by the whole number that he ſwears. One Oath is too many by one, when one is enough to damn. And who would ſwallow Poyſon, becauſe obliged ſeldom to repeat his draught? To paſs over this, that the ſame Conſiderations that contract the Number of your Oaths, do aggravate their Guilt, by arguing both a clearer knowledge

ledge of the ill you act, and a more bridling power to reſtrain it. But alas! how ſeldom does the ſilence of his Conſcience make for the Swearer? We know that Inſenſibility of Pain may as well proceed from the deadneſs and ſtupifi'dneſs of the part, as from a perfect and unmoleſted Health. In fighting, that is held a heavier blow, that (ſtunning) takes away the ſenſe of Pain, than that which pains the Senſe. Beware your Tranquility reſemble you not to the Toad, that feels not Poyſon, becauſe he is all Poyſon; and reſents no alteration from it, becauſe 'tis natural to him. There are Legions of Swearers, in whoſe mouths Cuſtom ſwears undiſcernedly; and who being tax'd with it, (and believe what they ſpeak too) ſwear that

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they are no Swearers, and thus commit the fault they would wipe off the imputation of. But wiſe Phyſicians hold it a fatal Symptom when Excrements are voided without the Patient's knowledge; and 'tis a ſign that the Thief has haunted long, when the Maſtiff forbears to bark at him. In ſuch caſes, Conſcience, like oppreſs'd Subjects under an arm'd Tyrant, forbears Expoſtulations, not out of want of the cauſes of complaint, but out of uſe of ſufferings. But certainly this Lethargy of Security is much more dangerous than the Feaver of a reſtleſs Conſcience; ſince in the one, the ſmart ſoon drives us to the ſearch of Phyſick, but the other is ſo far from addreſſing us to Remedies, that it never lets us know we need them. In ſuch ſtill Conſciences,

ſciences, as in the Sea, the ſmootheſt Seas, the ſmootheſt Calms forerun the rudeſt Tempeſts: For Conſcience, when long forc'd to play the Mute, turns to a Scold at laſt; being like o'erladen Muſkets, which whilſt no Fire comes near them, can ſcarce be known from them that are not charg'd; but at the leaſt Spark (of ſerious terror) that falls into the Touchhole, they will be ſure to fly about our ears.

PLEA III.

True; but (may you anſwer) there are others that ſwear as much as I, and oftner; why then are not they more reprehended for more frequent Faults?

Anſw. To this I may reply in the terms of the Apoſtle, *Am I*

Gal. 4. 16. *therefore your enemy becauſe I tell you the truth?* And add out of *Solomon*, Prov. 6. 23. *That reproofs of inſtruction are the way of life.* Prov. 13. 18. *That poverty and ſhame ſhall be to the man that refuſeth inſtruction, but he that regardeth reproof ſhall be honoured.* And laſtly, *That he that being often reproved, hardneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy.* I know there are many *Sauls*, whoſe Choler flames againſt thoſe *Davids* that endeavour their diſpoſſeſſion, tho they attempt the Cure even with Muſick, I mean, the mildeſt and the gentleſt way. But I muſt beg my Swearer to conſider, That 'tis an Inſpired Writer that aſſures me, Prov. 30. 12. *There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not waſhed from their filthineſs.* Your Excuſe is juſt as if in an Hoſpital a deſperate Patient ſhould ſay to his Phyſician,

ſician, Why I can need no Phyſick, for there are others here as ſick, and many more diſeaſed than I.

To complain of being reprehended for Vice, is to complain that one is car'd for; like the favourite Child, that cries for having the Knife taken away from him, when it is not from others, for whom we care not whether they cut themſelves or no: Which is as if our Eyes had right to quarrel with us, for not enduring that duſt there, we ſuffer in our Shoes. Certainly as we deſerve not Praiſe for other mens Vertues, ſo can we not decline Cenſure by the allegation of their faults. Take heed there be not places hot enough in Hell, tho others fry in more tormenting Flames; and remember, that as it is not Health to be not

altogether as ſick as gaſping people, ſo it is but a very ſorry goodneſs not to be as bad as the worſt. How ſtrangely are our Affections miſplac'd! In tranſitory Goods, which he rates juſtlieſt that prizes leaſt, we think we never have enough, if any body elſe has more; but in the Goods of the Mind, which cannot be overvalued, we think our ſelves ſufficiently ſtor'd, if others enjoy leſs. We are diſcontented at another's Wealth, and proud of his Vices; and whereas his greater Poverty ſhould exalt our Gratitude, and his greater Piety create our Emulation, his Riches make us envious, and his Sinfulneſs ſecure.

PLEA IV.

Well, (may you reply) but I ſcorn to ſwear falſly; and what I know

know to be true, why may I not ſafely ſwear?

Anſw. This weak Objection ſatisfies many Swearers, (ſo eaſily men believe what they deſire) but with as little Reaſon as they ſwear with need: For that not Falſe alone, but Raſh and Unneceſſary Oaths are forbidden, appears evidently by the expreſſion made uſe of in the Third Commandment; where Perjury is not alone condemn'd, but it is flatly written, *Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.* Which if needleſs and cuſtomary Swearing do not, 'twill be a ſtrange Riddle to me what the Commandment means to prohibit. But that this is the genuine Senſe and Deſign of thoſe words, is clear'd by theſe expreſs ones of our

our Saviour, (cited before in St. *Matthew's* Goſpel) *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid of old time, thou ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf, but ſhalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I ſay unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth*, &c. And to this ſenſe the annex'd affirmative Precept expounds the negative Law; the word *Communication* in the former ſhewing the Interdict to be chiefly meant of Oaths employ'd in common Diſcourſe and Converſation. Nay, God himſelf ſeems manifeſtly to determine all the Controverſy, by that clear diſtinction expreſs'd in a paſſage of *Leviticus*, whoſe words run thus, *And ye ſhall not ſwear by my name falſly; neither ſhalt thou prophane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.* And certainly if we muſt anſwer

Mat. 5. 33, 34, &c.

Lev. 19. 12.

at

at the Laſt Day, for every *Idle Word*, how much more will that Account be exacted of us for every Idle Oath?

The *Jews* at this day, (as I learn'd whilſt I lately convers'd with them at *Amſterdam*) have ſo profound a Reverence for that great Name of *Jehovah* (commonly called *Nomen Tetragrammaton*, and *Ineffable*, ſo frequently recorded in the Scriptures) that they hold it unlawful for Mortal Lips ſo much as to pronounce it: But tho I eſteem this fancy ſuitable enough to the reſt of the Extravagancies of their Modern Tenents, yet certainly their Superſtition will condemn our Irreverence. I remember an Expoſitor obſerves upon the *6th.* of *Deuteronomy*, and the *13th.* verſe, That the word there which ſignifies

Swear, is put in the *Hebrew* in the Paſſive Senſe, to imply that our ſwearing ought to be a kind of neceſſitated act. And a Father tells us of one *Clinias* a *Pythagorean*, who being fin'd in a great Sum of Money which he might have eſcaped with an Oath, choſe rather to pay the Penalty impos'd, than not to pay unto God the Reverence that he thought due unto his Name. Beſides, he that makes no Conſcience of ſwearing vainly, will ſoon make but little of ſwearing falſly: For he that in a lower degree ſo voluntarily breaks God's Commandment for nothing, may ſoon be drawn to break it in a little higher degree for his Profit.

And tho many of our Gallants (doubtleſs in a pure Complement to the Devil) are pleaſed to condemn

demn the breach of this Commandment, only when the ſinner wants the excuſe of an advantage by it; yet certainly he that uſes to toſs God's Sacred Name in his mouth without any Reverence, and employs it about every trifle, will eaſily be tempted not to care much what he does with it, nor to what uſe he puts it. And therefore holy *David* makes it a ſymptom of Hatred againſt God, when in a Pſalm he ſays, *Thine enemies take thy name in vain.* Theſe Conſiderations may clearly teach us what to think of thoſe uſual forms of ſpeech, ſuch as are, *God forgive me*, *God help you*; and the like of thoſe cuſtomary Exclamations, ſuch as are, *O God! O Jeſus!* and thoſe others that are uſually employ'd to proclaim our wonders, or ſupply the want of a Pſal. 139. 20.

Complement, with an exceſs of Irreverence: For tho theſe unregarded Treſpaſſes be in moſt perſons faults venial enough, as the effects rather of Ignorance and Heedleſneſs, than of Deſign; yet are they faſhions of ſpeaking, which beſides that they are always needleſs, and often ſcandalous, do but inure our mouths to a very ſawcy ſlighting of that Awful Name, which eternally to praiſe, ſhall be in Heaven both our Employment and our Happineſs.

PLEA V.

Nor will it avail the Oathmonger to reply, But I do not take God's Name in vain; for I ſwear not by God, or by Chriſt, or other Oaths of the like nature, but only by the Creatures, as by this Light, by this Bread, by Heaven,

ven, and the like; and the Creatures name I hope it is no ſin to take in vain.

Anſw. For ſure if we will allow our Saviour to be the beſt Interpreter of his Father's Commandments, he will teach us a very differing Leſſon, in thoſe (already twice alledged) words of St. *Matthew*; for doubtleſs he that forbids to ſwear by Heaven, the nobleſt, or by Earth, the meaneſt Ingredients of this vaſt Fabrick of the World, intended that Prohibition ſhould reach all other Creatures; which is as clear as light, in the enſuing words of the 37*th*. verſe of the ſame Chapter; where Chriſt's expreſs Injunction is, *But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatſoever is more than theſe, cometh of evil.* Mat. 5.34.

Beſides,

Beſides, either by the thing you ſwear by, you mean God, or no; if the former, your Guilt is evident in the Breach of God's Commandment; and if the latter, remember what the Spirit ſays in *Jeremy*, *How ſhall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forſaken me, and ſworn by them that are no gods.* And in effect, 'tis queſtionable in Divinity, whether be the greater Sin, to ſwear falſly by the Creator, or with truth by the Creatures; for as the former is an act of high Impiety, ſo is the latter of Idolatry: Becauſe ſwearing by any thing being a part of Divine Worſhip, (as the Paſſages the Margin leads to, will evidence) implies in us an acknowledgment of ſome Divinity in the thing we ſwear by; which without Omniſcience, is uncapable to diſcern the

Jer. 5. 7.

Deut. 6. 13. & 10. 20. Iſa. 65. 16. Joſh. 23. 7. Jer. 12. 16. Exod. 23. 13.

the inward Truth or Falſhood of our Oaths; and without Omnipotence, unable to reward the one, or puniſh the other. A conſideration ſo prevalent with many of the Primitive Martyrs, that they choſe rather to expire in Torments, than ſwear by the Genius of the Emperor. Nor is an Oath only an Act or Species of Divine Worſhip, *Iſa.* 48. 1. and 45. 23. but by a *Synechdoche* is taken for the whole Worſhip that men pay their Maker, in the 63*d. Pſalm, and the laſt*, and in *Jer.* 4. 2.

PLEA VI.

Ally'd to this Plea, is theirs that will not flatly ſwear by God, but by certain fictitious terms and abbreviatures, as by *Dod*, &c. and by the like diſguizing of them believe to juſtify their Oaths; as

if

1 Sam. 28. 8. if they cared not, ſo (like *Saul* to the Witch of *Endor*) they may go mask'd to Satan.

Anſ. To theſe I ſhall only anſwer Gal. 6. 7. with the Apoſtle, *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*; ſince (as the 1 Cor. 3. 19. ſame Apoſtle elſewhere ſays) *He taketh the wiſe in their own craftineſs.* Well may this childiſh Evaſion cheat our own Souls, but never him, who judgeth as well as he diſcerns Intents; and regards not ſo much the preciſe ſignification of your words, as what they are meant and underſtood for; which (in ſuch caſes) is uſually an Oath, ſince the ſame credit is both given and expected upon theſe mongrel Oaths, that is paid to thoſe they mean, but would not ſeem. Theſe people bring into my mind the Bloody Perſecutors of our firſt Chriſtians,

Chriſtians, who cloathed them in the skins of ſavage beaſts, that it might ſeem no crime to worry them; for ſo theſe Hypocrites diſguiſe God's Name, to give themſelves the licenſe to diſhonour it.

'Tis a very pretty ſlight of theſe Gentlemen, to cozen the Devil to their own advantage, and to find out By-ways to Damnation, and deſcend to Hell by a pair of back-ſtairs; and methinks argues a Cunning much about the ſize of his, that pleaded he was innocent of falſifying the King's Coin, becauſe he had diſplac'd ſome Letters in the *Motto*. But to Hell, as to Towns, theſe ſingular By-paths (tho leſs frequented) may lead directlier than the broad High-ways: And to theſe Gentlemen, and thoſe that rely upon the laſt

answer'd Objection, I shall at present only recommend the serious pondering of that passage of the Wise-man in the *Proverbs*: *All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits.*

Prov. 16. 2.

PLEA VII.

It is a usual Excuse of some sort of Swearers, That they swear only some peculiar Oath, and that one kind of Oath cannot amount to such a Crime as the more scrupulous pretend.

Answ. An Apology equally excusing with the Thiefs that should alledg, that he commits all his Robberies upon the same Horse; and the Drunkard, that should offer to justify his beastliness, by affirming, that he never foxes himself, but with one sort of Wine,

Wine, or in ſuch a peculiar unalter'd Bowl. Remember what an Apoſtle ſomewhere ſays of ſinning, *Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* James 2. 10. Juſt as a man that wounds a Buck in the Vitals, is truly and properly ſaid to have kill'd the Deer, altho the Shaft reach'd but the Head or Heart, leaving the Legs and other parts untouch'd. Thus in a Globe, tho there be numerous parts, yet he is guilty of breaking the whole Globe, that breaks it but within the *Arctick* Circle, tho near the Equator it have eſcap'd that violence; for whereſoe'er you break it, you break the Globe; its Eſſence conſiſting in the entireneſs that is ruined by the fraction of any part. Sin, becauſe natural to us, is ſo readily learnt by us,

that as in ſhooting, by practiſing to hit *Wrens* and ſilly *Sparrows*, we learn the art of killing *Feldifares*, *Thruſhes*, and the other ſort of Birds we never aimed at; ſo by committing ſome ſmall ſin, we learn, tho inſenſibly (and perhaps undeſignedly) to commit other and groſſer kinds of ſins.

One act may make us do diſpoſitively, what *Moſes* is recorded to
Exod. 32. 19. have done literally (at the foot of Mount *Sinai*) break all the Ten Commandments at once; for ſingle diſobediences, if preſumptuous, may have the power to exile that Fear of God, whoſe expulſion compriſes in it the whole trade of ſin, which (Conſcience once deſpiſed) is known without being learnt. If a reverence to the Commandment were that which did place limits to the variety of your

your Oaths, it would not permit you the uſe of any one, but lay an equal reſtraint in relation to them all; ſince the ſinfulneſs of ſwearing does conſiſt, not in the diverſity of our Oaths, but in their forbiddenneſs. But this Excuſe it ſelf is often wanting to many of our Gallants, who not content with the received forms of diſhonouring their Maker's name, do as much affect Novelty in their Oaths, as in the Faſhion; and if they have a gift of ſingularity in ſwearing, are as proud of it, as of their Miſtreſs's favour: Such people are as Nice as Impious in their Oaths, they will never uſe any till it be ſtale and threadbare, but (ever like their Cloaths) leave them off before they have been worn long enough to grow old. But whilſt they are thus induſtri-

ous

ous in the diſcovery of new ways of provoking their Creator, 'tis much to be feared, that they do but (if I may ſo ſpeak) find out for themſelves a *Northweſt* Paſſage to Damnation.

PLEA VIII.

But, continues the Swearer, if I ſwear not, I ſhall not be believed.

Anſw. But ('tis replied again) Belief is better wanted, than purchaſed at ſo dear a rate as ſin; ſince he that parts with Heaven, makes over a bad bargain, tho the whole world were the accepted Price. But alas! unleſs men will conſtrue their diſobediences for arguments of your obſequiouſneſs, how unlikely is it, that (by believing you ſpeak truth, becauſe you

Matth. 16. 26.

you uſe to ſwear you do not lye) they ſhould take your readineſs to tranſgreſs one of God's Commands, for a proof that you dare not break another.

How ridiculous would men eſteem that Merchant, that ſhould be confident to gain Credit amongſt Lenders, by giving Bond for every trivial Sum, for which others are truſted upon their bare word? For in Oaths (as in moſt other things) too conſtant a frequency depreciates that authority which their rareneſs as well as nature gives them: That not being held a ſufficient Security for the belief of a doubted or important truth, that is laviſh'd to authoriſe every trivial and impertinent aſſertion; nor thought a convincing atteſtation of a queſtioned truth, that flows rather from a cuſtom of ſinning,

ſinning, than deſign of confirming. No, no; he needs not many Oaths, that uſes few; for to be known to make a Conſcience of an Oath, will gain your words more credit than the ſwearing of a thouſand; it being a viſible and remarkable Judgment of the offended Deity upon Oaths, that their Number diſcredits that Truth it ſelf would perſuade.

Since then 'tis your habitude of ſwearing needleſly, that alone engages you to a neceſſity (as you call it) of ſwearing to be believed, let your diſcontinuance remove that obligation Cuſtom only has contracted; and believe me, that the moſt perſuading aſſeveration of all, is ſo to live as not to need to ſwear. That ſociableneſs which you alledge to extenuate your fault, but aggra-

vates

vates the heinousness of the crime; by confessing Customary Oaths to be like jealous Tyrants, whom we cannot entertain, without giving admittance to their Retinue and their Guard, since in this Vice you acknowledge the act an engagement to a repetition; and that Oaths which are the ultimate and highest Confirmations of Truth in their nature, must yet (by this fine Policy) themselves derive an Authority from their Multitude; which is very unnecessary where the Assertor is believed, and usually does but create distrusts where the Veracity is not credited. Heb. 6.16.

PLEA IX.

Of kin to this is their Apology who plead, That if they do not swear, their words shall neither

be fear'd nor obey'd by their very Servants; mens ears being of late ſo accuſtomed unto Oaths, that they are neceſſary to make them think we are in earneſt. This is the uſual Objection of the *French*, amongſt whom this Vice is grown ſo Epidemical (as of Blackneſs amongſt the *Ethiopians*) its commonneſs has removed all the deformities they would otherwiſe find in it.

Anſw. But ſure there are ways enough to make your ſervants obey your Commands, without your breaking God's. Gravity and Severity, not uſing them to hear you ſwear, are courſes likelier far than Oaths to reach that end: Which if they yet ſhould fail of, they would turn this fancied inconvenience into an advantage

tage of neceſſitating you to the election of Religious Servants. Certainly, ſince the ſole univerſality of Vice has drawn upon us this ſuppos'd neceſſity, a general and unanimous deſertion of it muſt needs be the propereſt expedient for its removal. And, believe me, 'tis but an extravagant way of teaching our Inferiors to pay us their duties, to teach them to diſobey the Commands of their Superiors by our own example, and to lead them the way to deſpiſe the Injunctions of the moſt Ador'd Powers, to whom we confeſs to owe an exquiſite Obedience, upon the higheſt Conſiderations.

But admitting (as the diſperſedneſs of this Vice too often forces us) the ſuppoſal of this Plea to be true, yet will the Inference

prove conſequent? For by the ſame reaſon the Thief might juſtify the unreclaimedneſs in his Robberies, by alledging if he forſake that Trade, his Purſe muſt ſoon grow empty: Or the *Buona Roba* excuſe her Proſtitutions, by ſaying, That unleſs ſhe continue her former Profeſſion of Wantonneſs, ſhe ſhall no more be preſented with New Gowns, and Linnen richly lac'd, nor be able any longer to maintain her wonted Riots; her Converſion (by forbidding her to be the Cheriſher of her Gallants looſe Exceſſes) depriving her of the only fewel of her Bravery. Upon how few could we with juſtice preſs Religious Duties, if ſuch petty Inconveniences attending their performance, were a warrantable diſpenſation or diſengagement from it? Surely he

that

that requires that we ſhould *pull out our right eyes, and cut off our right hands*, if they oppoſe our entrance in at the ſtreight Gate, will ſcarce give them admittance, that will not purchaſe it by the parting with ſuch trivial Conveniences. It is much leſs unreaſonable that you ſhould be neither believed nor obeyed with readineſs, than that God ſhould either not be believed when he ſpeaks, or not obeyed when he commands. For take this for a Truth, to which Oracles are Fables, That never any man commits a ſin to ſhun an inconvenience, but one way or other, ſoon or late, he plunges himſelf by that act into a far worſe inconveniency, than that he would decline. Mat. 5. 29, 30.

PLEA

PLEA X.

Others there are that uſe to repreſent, That they ſwear not but when they are angry; and then (for all our Clamours and Exaggerations) they mean no harm at all.

A. But would you take it for a juſtification of your Wife's Adulteries, if ſhe ſhould tell you, That ſhe never proſtitutes her ſelf, but when her Fits of Luſt tempt her to give that ſatisfaction to her appetite? Beſides, this is but to excuſe one fault with another; and with no greater juſtice, than his that ſhould defend a Baſtard's Crimes, by alledging that his Mother was a Whore; ſince the Nature as well as the Duty of Virtue being the Moderation of our Paſ-

ſions,

sions, it is evident that their excesses degenerate into sins; and therefore how that can be a good excuse that needs one, and how that anger which in it self is sinful, can impart an innocence to productions in their own nature culpable, let those that are concerned determine.

For my part, when I consider the Apostle's Command, *Be ye angry, and sin not*; I cannot but apprehend, that when our Passions swell into excess, they are indeed contaminated by the Guiltiness of their Productions, but confer not upon them a meritoriousness which themselves want. But why, I pray, in every passionate mood, must you be transported to commit Sins that are as unprofitable as impious; and to deserve your Crosses, by a sawcy Provocation Eph. 4. 26.

cation of your God, whom you then endeavour to make your Enemy, when you most need his favour to protect you from disquiets? Why must your Tongue fly in your Maker's face, and vilify his Sacred Name, because your Dice turn up *Size-ace* rather than *Quatre-trey*? For either he is the Guider of those seeming Chances, or meddles not with their disposal: In this last case you are palpably injurious, to make God the Object of your Choler, when he is not the Cause of it; and in the former case your folly is not inferior, instead of propitiating, to incense that Deity, who is the sole Disposer of those Fortunes we either wish or fear.

But take heed he give you not too much pretence to be so, by displeasing you, (as discreet Mothers

thers whip their froward Children that cry without cauſe) and puniſh in his anger theſe raſh and culpable expreſſions of yours. As for the other branch of the excuſe, I mean the harmleſsneſs of your intent; to that I muſt reply, That our Actions may as well offend as our Intents, if they be ſubſequent to our knowledge of God's averſion to what we do. And uſually men take it for a ſufficient offence, to do what we are ſure will diſoblige them, tho with a differing deſign. Nor do we think our ſelves leſs injured by Robbers when they ſtrip us, becauſe they offer us that violence, not with intent to anger us, but only to make a Booty of our Purſes. 'Tis a received Maxim in Divinity which Moraliſts prop with their full concurrence, That no Good-

neſs (much leſs bare Innocence) of the Intent can juſtify a formal ſinful evil. If then the committing of this ſin againſt the knowledge of the ill you act, be not crime enough to condemn you, you muſt not be deny'd my Abſolution. But withal, I muſt acquit moſt ſinners in the world upon the ſelf-ſame ſcore; and believe the threatned Flames of Hell as uninhabited as inſupportable; ſince certainly ſuch ſinners (if any ſuch there be) muſt be prodigious no leſs for their unequal'd rarity, than deviliſh perverſeneſs, that are ſuch Monſters as to offend their Maker, merely to offend him. For in Philoſophy our Maſters teach us, That Ill under that notion cannot be the object of our choice; (that being ever a real, or at leaſt a ſeeming good);

and

and tho in our miſguided elections we oftentimes embrace it, yet that is ever under a contrary notion, and rather by miſtake than by deſign.

But oh! how induſtrious are ſinners to deceive themſelves; and how ſtrangely does the Devil faſcinate and blind deluded Mortals, when (by ſuch ſilly and impertinent Excuſes) he perſuades them rather to expoſe their judgments to a certain diſcredit, than let their Souls be ranſom'd from an Ignoble Slavery, into a Glorious Freedom; and rather ſuffer their Abilities to be believed weak, than permit their Lives to be made virtuous. Certainly, ſuch people would make me as much aſtoniſh'd as themſelves are faulty, if I did not conſider this gallant property, of rather ma-

king bad Apologies to defend their Sins, than good Reſolutions to forſake them, as intail'd upon them by a kind of traduction from our firſt Parents, who hoped with Fig-leave Aprons, and the faint Shade of Trees, to hide both their Nakedneſs and their Diſobedience from the Omniſcient Eye of God himſelf.

I will not waſte Ink upon their ſucceſsleſs and impudent defence, that make their Drunkenneſs an Apology for their Swearing, and make that an excuſe for their ſin, which is it ſelf a ſin above excuſe; but with as little juſtice, as the Keeper of the Lions in the *Tower* could excuſe any particular Tragedy they had acted, by alledging that he had voluntarily let them looſe. But ſince the Tempers that moſt diſpoſe men to a flux

flux of Oaths, are Drunkenneſs and Choler, give me leave by the by, to take notice of the chief Midwives that are uſually aſſiſtant to the birth of Oaths; and to obſerve, That as the Thunder falls not, but when Heaven is over-caſt, ſo we are proneſt to ſwear, when the Beaſtlineſs of our Paſſions hath either blinded or depoſed our Reaſon.

PLEA XI.

'Tis confeſt, you may alledge, that Swearing is a moſt heinous Sin, but I do never ſwear my ſelf, but only to repeat thoſe Oaths of another (which are therefore his Sins not mine) whoſe omiſſion would ſpoil the Jeſt.

Anſw. This brings into my mind the known Story of that merry

merry Gentleman, who to ſhew the ſullen Juſtice how the Maſtiff he had kill'd, had firſt aſſaulted him and overthrown him, runs full butt at the formal Sir's breaſt, and ſends both him and his Chair to ſalute the ground: For when a Sin cannot be imitated, without being committed, then that you but repeat it only, is as ſorry an excuſe, as his muſt be, who to illuſtrate the relation of a Murder, ſhould Piſtol the firſt man he meets withal. Beſides, when did Tranſgreſſion by Preſident turn Innocence? and what was unlawful in the Act, become legitimate in the Repetition? It is acknowledged, that the relating of another's Oaths may ſometimes be not only lawful but neceſſary; but then it muſt be either to diſcover or convert the Swearer; or elſe when

when the Oath is ſome material Circumſtance of a ſerious Narrative. But here the very End adds guiltineſs to the Action, it being only to make another's Vice applauded, and render his Sin both infectious and immortal. But how will you juſtify this introducing of God's Name only (like a Fool in a Play) to make the Company laugh, and to bring it into contempt, from the diſobedience to the Prohibition of taking God's Name in vain? Unleſs (perhaps) the conſequents of your ſin teach you a conſtruction that may reſolve this difficulty; and the Judgments your ſwearing will provoke, ſhew you in what ſenſe you have taken your Maker's Name *in vain.* Remember how ſad a Reckoning was preſented to *Belſhazzar* by the Hand-writing upon Dan. 5. 5.

the

the Wall, for having turn'd the Veſſels of the Temple into Implements and Furtherers of Mirth, at his ſumptuous Entertainment; and conſider betimes, that God may poſſibly leſs reſent the making merry in his Holy Cups, than the making merry with his moſt Holy Name.

To this may well be added, That in this ſinning at the ſecond hand, the Copied Sin is held more criminal in the Tranſcript than in the Original; for beſides that this Swearer by Imitation acknowledges himſelf ſo delighted with the other's ſin, that he becomes the Devil's Mountebank (or his *Zany*) to have it admired by all that hear him (and we know that Approbation is but an after-Conſent); beſides this, I ſay, the Leading Swearer has the excuſe of an immediate Applauſe; whereas the

Apiſh

Apiſh Repeater wrongs and diſcredits his own Piety, only to celebrate and proclaim another's Wit; if that be not too partially term'd Wit, that appears ſuch only to our Corruptions: Since when the Oath muſt make the Jeſt, 'tis only the Devil in us that is pleas'd with it. Handſome Replies are good without Oaths, and dull ones will not be made good by them: To the one they are needleſs, to the other they are uſeleſs; that being juſtly enough appliable to Oaths in Apothegms, which is uſually believ'd in painting of Faces, That Beauties need it not, and deformed Women look but ridiculouſly for it.

Fools (ſays the Wiſe-man) *make a mock of ſin*; they can take pleaſure to hear him affronted, in whoſe Communion conſiſts hap- Prov. 14. 9.

pineſs; and make that the fewel of their jollity, that ſhould be the object of their deteſtation. For my part I do not like this doing in jeſt, what a man may be damn'd for in earneſt; and I much wonder that we frail Mortals, whoſe faults are more numerous than the very minutes we have liv'd, ſhould think our own ſins too few to condemn us, without adopting thoſe of others too! and to our crimes (too numerous already) adding theſe ſins of Supererogation! But to reſume our Theme.

PLEA XII.

There remains yet a prejudice to remove, which though very rarely the pretence of Swearers, is very often a prevalent motive to ſwearing, and is an evil by ſo much the more obſtructive to theſe

ſinners

ſinners reclaiming, by how much the more ſilently it oppoſes it. This is a fooliſh fancy that many Swearers cheriſh, that their Oaths make them look'd upon with a kind of admiration, as Gentleman-like ſins; and witneſs in them ſo bold and daring a courage, that it extends to a fearleſsneſs of God himſelf.

Anſw. But though their bluſhing to own ſo childiſh a pretence, be a ſufficient diſproval of it; yet ſince, as in War, ſo in diſputes, we conſider not ſo much the perſonal ſtrength of the adverſary we attempt, as the rank he holds among thoſe that employ him; 'twill not be amiſs to remove an obſtacle, made conſiderable by being ſo great a Vice's motive, and ſo great a motive to that Vice:

Though of this ſort of Swearers (as of ſome Savages that lurk in Rocks and Woods) it be much more difficult to obtain a Battel, than to get a Victory; and to draw them to the Field, than to give them a Defeat.

Doubtleſs theſe needy Gentlemen will never tempt the admiration of Wiſe men upon any other ſcore, than that of the greatneſs of their folly. They muſt be thought ſtrangely neceſſitous of meriting qualities that do ſo meanly by their bad ones implore and court men's good opinion: And I know not whether be the greater, their impudence to expect it for the recompence of vice, or their profuſeneſs that ſhould ſquander it away on thoſe who have no juſter title to our eſteem, than that by which the miſerableſt of Beggars pretend

tend to our Charity, the multitude of their imperfections and wants. Wiſe men will make theſe poor and empty projects, the objects ſolely of their ſcorn and laughter; and only thoſe that want eſteem for themſelves, will reward you with it; and for ſuch peoples praiſes, they will but diſcommend you: So that that empty applauſe you are ambitious of, will either be impoſſible to be purchas'd, or not deſerve to be purſued. But what, your Oaths will make men take you for a Gentleman! you are deceived, there is too little Epicuriſm and Chargeableneſs in your vice, to be affected to that Quality. 'Twas ſtill ſo cheap, and now grown ſo common, that I wonder our Grandees, though they deſiſt not for the ſins ſake, renounce it not, at leaſt, for the

the Company's. Muſt then Vices be arguments of the poſſeſſion of that dignity, that Vertue is the ſole true means to purchaſe? I'm ſure it ſhould not be ſo; but grant it were, Will you pretend to Nobility, by that alone which is not the property, but the vice of Gentlemen? and entitle your ſelf to that illuſtrious Quality, by that which, in God's Eye, makes them unworthy (if not diveſts them) of it? At that rate your pretenſions would parallel his mirth, who boaſted a deſcent from the firſt *Cæſars*, barely upon his being (like moſt of them) almoſt deformedly Hawk Nos'd; deriving his intereſt in their blood, only from his ſympathy with their defects.

For

For my part, I muſt confeſs, I am not ambitious of thoſe badges of Gentility, that Chriſtianity delivers for the ſymptoms of Reprobation: Nor do I find men deſirous of the Gout, though the Proverb have appropriated that diſeaſe to Rich men.

But then (you think) your courage will be unqueſtionable: And indeed it may ſeem that you want not probability to prop up your hopes, ſince you deſperately hazard the incurring of Immortal Torments, for that, for which no Wiſe man would venture the ſtretching of his little Finger. But ſince the kindred betwixt vertues is not ſo remote, that the want of any one ſhould conclude the poſſeſſion of any other, and your impiety convince us of your courage; Experience teaches us, That

no

no men more fear what they ſhould contemn, than thoſe that contemn moſt what they ſhould fear. And Martyrs have embrac'd thoſe Flames with joy, that impious perſons durſt not ſo much as think of without horror.

That boldneſs that men perſonate againſt their Maker (were it real) would not be the effect of their reſolution, but either of their inconſiderateneſs, or their unbelief. *The wicked flee* (ſays *Solomon*) *when no man purſueth; but the righteous are bold as a Lyon.* And indeed it is no great encouragement to deſpiſe this life, to want either hope, or at leaſt confidence of a better. Nor will all men ſo eaſily conclude, that he that fears not to venture his Soul, dares freely venture his Body. For ſince it is not the eſſential worth of things,

Prov. 28. 1.

but

but the proprietary's value of them, that their dearneſs to us is to be meaſured by: That ſtandard, and moſt mens actions, will preſent us the ſoul and body in a very inverted order of precedency; the greater part of men living for the Body as if they were all Body, and ſlighting their Souls as if they had no Souls, or had them but to loſe. It being but too true of the very greateſt of thoſe people, that in themſelves as in their ſtables, the Employment of the Man is but to ſerve the Beaſt. And truly he that conſiders that the neglect of the Soul proceeds from the former dotage on the Body, will think that a very unlikely conſequence, that infers a readineſs to hazard the latter, from the careleſsneſs of what becomes of the former. He that

ſhakes off the emboldening Fear of God, betrays himſelf to as numerous apprehenſions, as did the weak-ey'd Frantick, who to be ſecur'd from the offenſiveneſs of the Sun's brighter Beams, by pulling out his eyes, expos'd himſelf to all thoſe dangers and thoſe horrors that attend on blindneſs.

PLEA XIII.

But, ſay ſome Swearers, if I renounce this Vice, my Repentance will procure me a deriſion I ſhall be aſham'd of.

Anſ. Muſt then that Baſhfulneſs which is both the Livery and Guard of Virtue, oppoſe our addreſſes to it? Like Ditches when the Draw-bridge is cut down; which tho their uſe be to ſecure the Fortreſs from Enemies, forbid acceſs

acceſs to them that once have ſalley'd, when they are meditating a Retreat. But yours is an excuſe as receivable as the Whores, who pretended Baſhfulneſs for their turning honeſt. I was much taken with an *Italian* Gentleman, who ſpying a Friend of his peep out his head from behind the door of a *Bordello*, to ſee if he might retire undiſcover'd; *Come forth, come forth*, cries he, *you need not be aſhamed to leave that ſluttiſh place; but you ſhould have been aſham'd to have entred it.*

Have Innocence and Vice then ſo chang'd natures, that he that did not bluſh to commit ſin, ſhould bluſh to forſake it? And he that hath once fram'd miſhapen Characters, be aſhamed afterwards to write a Neater Hand? The bluſhes that do wait on our

Repentance, proceed from an implicite confeſſion it imports of ſome former faultineſs; and ſo if it have been ſhameful to have committed a fault, how much more ſhould we be aſhamed to continue; and how little can it diſcredit us to forſake it? And truly, he that thinks a fault a juſt engagement to a relapſe, leſt his Converſion ſhould make him laugh'd at, deſerves the Cenſure men would paſs upon that fool, who having ſlipt one foot into a Quagmire, ſhould rather proceed to be entirely bogg'd, than by timely ſtepping back, to confeſs a miſchance that may provoke mens laughter. I had much rather men ſhould laugh at my retracting, than God frown upon my relapſes; and care not ſo much who ſmiles at any action that makes my Conſcience

Conſcience do ſo, (not by way of deriſion, but of applauſe.)

How contradicting are the deſires of mortals! We are angry if we are not thought virtuous, and yet we are aſhamed to appear ſo, and think it a juſt ground of quarrel, to be reported the contrary of what we bluſh to ſeem! Like Ladies, who tho they long to live till they grow old, fret to appear what they deſire to be. The ſinner that is overmuch concerned in bad mens opinions of good mens actions, does as it were ſwear Allegiance to the Devil, and let him bore his Ear through with an Awl againſt the Door-Poſt, ſealing an engagement to perpetual bondage; for (as the ſame men that crucified our Saviour, derided him) as long as the greateſt part of men are wick-

Exod. 21. 6.

ed

ed enough to injure Piety, there will be found men impudent enough to mock it.

For Sinners knowing that in the world's eſteem, the extent of a Deformity makes it vaniſh, and that the Generality of a Crime does ſo diveſt it of that name, that every body's ſins are thought no body's, are by the cheapneſs of the expedient eaſily ſway'd to intruſt the protection of their Reputation rather to common Guilt than to a private Virtue; and to ſeek an innocence rather by adding to the number of the wicked, by their Calumnies and Deriſion, than by increaſing the number of the godly by their Converſion. Thus being brib'd by their own intereſts to diſcredit ſuch actions as they are tied to, and yet will not practice; 'tis no wonder if by

ſcoffingly

ſcoffingly condemning what cloſely condemns them (tho therein their Conſciences give their Tongues the lye) they cunningly endeavour to father their faults, not upon their want of Piety, but ſtore of Wit, and to make their ſlavery to their Paſſions paſs for the ſuperiority of their Judgments.

But ſure he is very unfit to be Chriſt's Soldier, that bluſhes to wear his Heavenly Leader's Colours, and wants the Courage to diſobey Example. He that will take the *Canaan* above by violence, muſt imitate the Conqueror of the *Canaan* below, who profeſt to the world, *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve, whether the gods, &c. But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.* Our Saviour (who Joſh. 24. 15.

for

for us *endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame*) apportions Felicity to the
Mat. 5. 11. being *reviled* for his ſake: And congruouſly his Apoſtles being cauſleſly miſuſed by the Chief-
Acts 5. 41. Prieſts, *departed from the preſence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to endure ſhame for his name.* Deriſion for Virtue is a grievance as old as *Job*; who in
Job 12. 4. his time complained, that *the juſt and upright man is laughed to ſcorn*: And 'twas even Chriſt's own caſe; of whom one of the Evangeliſts in ſome place records, That *they*
Mat 9. 23. *laughed him to ſcorn.* But we may ſay of the Reſolute Chriſtian what the Wiſe-man ſays of his Maker,
Prov. 3. 34. That he *ſcorneth the ſcorners*: And ſurely, ſince God is ſaid to laugh divers Tranſgreſſors of his Law to ſcorn, 'tis not improbable that he will not fail to laugh them to

ſcorn,

ſcorn, that for his Glory ſcorn not to be laugh'd at: Eſpecially, ſince ſuch perſons are deeply acceſſary to their own and Piety's Diſgrace, by a ſneakingneſs which ſo implies a Guilt, that where it proceeds not from a fault, it is one: And themſelves highly countenance the diſcountenancers of the Profeſſion of Religion, by being aſham'd to own it. Whereas the loſs of the blind world's applauſe ſhould prove as little diſſuaſive in the point of Converſion, as its acquiſition ſhould be a motive. The man that dares be good without a Preſident, looks like the nobleſt Preſident of good: Tho to ſay truth, as Horſes are not much priz'd, only for not refuſing to ſet forth unleſs others lead the way, and for not leaving the track they once are in, becauſe none but

reſty Horſes are guilty of the contrary faults; ſo is not the Gallantry of contemning the opinions and ſmiles of ſinners ſo meritorious as it is thought; ſince none but Children (and they too laugh'd at for it) will let themſelves be frighted from what they love, by others making mouths and faces at it. Could ſingularity in goodneſs conſiſt with the innocence of others, a Gallant Spirit would look upon that Solitude rather as a delight than a determent; ſince 'tis not a greater Affliction to his Charity, than 'tis a Complement to his Generoſity, by aſſuring his Devotion of the higheſt extraction, and reſtraining the acts of it to the nobleſt ends.

He is the welcomeſt to Paradiſe who ventures tho alone, and comes

un-

unattended thither: I mean, who by ſo reſolute a Bravery, as ſetting forward to Heaven, without ſtaying for Company, gives ſo good Example, that he arrives there with much difficulty. To all this I muſt add, That when once 'tis noted that the apprehenſion of being derided for retracting, is the ſole obſtacle that ſtands between your Reaſon and ſo important a change as your Converſion, they will juſtly eſteem your parvanimity ſo great, that you deſerve deriſion for ſo poorly fearing it; and ſo you will fall into that Contempt you would decline, by your very ſhunning of it. If then Laughter in this caſe cannot abſolutely on both ſides be avoided, ſure it's much better to endure that of Fools at your Repentance, than that of Wiſe Men at your Time-

rouſneſs. Did not Martyrs, thorough Frowns, Infamy, and Torments, force themſelves a Paſſage to the ſame Heaven you aim at, and will you with Smiles be frighted from your Happineſs? I am aſham'd on't; and if you be not ſo of your ſelf, Chriſt will be ſo of you: For, *Whoſoever* (ſays our Saviour, who *before Pontius Pilate witneſſed a good confeſſion*) *ſhall be aſhamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall the ſon of man be aſhamed when he cometh in the glory of his father, with the holy Angels.* And truly, for my part, I had rather be laugh'd at by men on earth, than howl with the Devils in Hell.

Mark 8. 33.

DIGRESSION.

[Nor need we be (as even the beſt New Converts often are) ſo ſcrupulous to own Repentance for fear of injuring Humility; ſince certainly if the latter be a Virtue, ſhe cannot enjoin a Vice ſo heinous as Ingratitude, by forbidding us even ſuch a Retribution as Acknowledgment; for ſure 'tis the leaſt return we owe to God for his Gifts, to confeſs that we have received them. Who would not tax him of Unthankfulneſs, that being loaded with a Prince's Preſents, ſhould diſclaim them, for fear of confeſſing himſelf to be

The Lines included within this *Parentheſis* [ ] may perhaps paſs for one, and appear ſomewhat foreign both to the Theme and Style of this Diſcourſe: I have yet ventur'd to inſert them here, to pleaſe a Perſon that I much affect; leaving to the Reader a liberty to skip them if he pleaſe; but if he chance to vouchſafe them a peruſal, I muſt beg for them his attention, not that they deſerve it, but becauſe they need it. *It ends* p. 87.

be rich. Altho a Woman prais'd for her Complexion, be bound in Modeſty to gainſay thoſe Praiſes, yet if the Fire have given her a good Colour, 'tis not thought Pride to refrain contradicting, becauſe the Effect being natural to the Fire, and requiring no excellent Prediſpoſitions in the Object, to refer thoſe aſcriptions to their Cauſe, is held to juſtify the not rejecting them: So tho there be an eye of Vanity in the Publication of thoſe Graces, whoſe near reſemblance (or affinity) to Virtues merely Moral, leaves their Extraction dubious; yet true Repentance is a Grace ſo purely foreign, that being acted in us by a Principle not native or acquired, but infus'd, to own the having received it, is not to boaſt our Merits, but acknowledge our Debts;

Debts; the vanity being rather on the other ſide, who by pretending to diſclaim ſo ſupernatural a Grace, imply that they eſteem it to be their own Inheritance or Purchaſe. God's Goodneſs being ſo free, that 'tis the only Title to its ſelf; and the motives of his Favours being taken from himſelf and not from us, his Bleſſings argue indeed the Bounty of the Benefactor, but infer not the Merit of the obliged; ſince the Spirit's Irradiations into our Souls (like the Sun's ſhining upon Shrubs and Hemlock) is due to the diffuſiveneſs of his Goodneſs, not the attractiveneſs of ours. Moral Virtues may perhaps be reſembled to Great Mens Cloaths, which ſupply thoſe that ſee them, with ſome conjectures of the Quality of thoſe that wear them:

But

But inſpired Graces (ſuch as Repentance is) are like their Liveries, whoſe Gawdineſs evinces not the Footman's Deſerts, but his Lord's Splendidneſs; and in mens eſteem entitles the Lacquey to nothing but a good Maſter. Thoſe better Qualities Blood may convey, or Induſtry acquire, like Honours conferr'd by Princes, ſuppoſe the Party deſerving; but Heavenly Donatives are like Alms, which ever preſume need; and where they are more liberally beſtow'd, ſtronglier conclude the greatneſs of the Party's Wants than Merits.

Upon ſuch Conſiderations, poſſibly, as theſe, the great Apoſtle (after a recital of his firſt unworthineſs) ſcruples not to write of himſelf in ſuch bold erms as theſe; *By the grace of God*

I am

I am what I am, and his grace which was beſtowed on me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, (meaning the College of the Holy Apoſtles) *yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.* 1 Cor. 15. 10.

(I might produce many reſembling Paſſages of Scripture, had I not handled this Subject elſewhere.) But truly, ſince you are commanded in the Goſpel to *let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven*; you ought to conſider whether or no your expreſſing a ſerious diſlike of others preſent, and your own former practice (in point of Swearing) do not either proclaim your Repentance, or infer you a Hypocrite. And if your Reaſon (as queſtionleſs it will) lead you to embrace the affirmative, be- In an Eſſay of miſtaken Modeſty. Mat. 5. 16.

lieve you are then further to be put in mind, that not only the Confeſſion of our Virtues is juſtifiable when it is neceſſary to your Juſtification, but (tho in all other caſes our actions ſhould commend us, not we our ſelves, Praiſe being a Debt which he that pays himſelf, acquits all others of) even the mention of our own Praiſes is allowable, when they are produc'd, not to extol, but barely to vindicate us, and finds a ſufficient defence in its being neceſſary unto ours.

The owning of Repentance has ſo much of Penance in it, that there is not any Grace more indiſpos'd to a perverſion into Vanity; for ſtill Repentance (like the Pardon it endeavours to procure) does preſuppoſe a Fault, having this particular unhappineſs

above

above other Virtues, that men cannot arrive at it but through Vice. And therefore in the return to the diſintereſtedneſs of action, Virtue (who can ſcarce more reward our love to her, than by imparting unto us a higher degree of it) commonly recompenceth ſo unſelfiſh a Duty, by making it a powerful engagement to perſeverance againſt Relapſes; and any affront or loſs ſuſtain'd upon that ſcore, turns to a Bleſſing, by producing in us towards Religion, the uſual property of Sufferers for a Cauſe, more Zeal and Paſſion for the Party men have been Sufferers for. But admit you could not own Repentance, without being fancied vain, muſt the fear of others ſins continue (thoſe that are immediately) yours? Will you rather let others ſin by

imitation of your bad actions, than in their miſconſtruction of your good ones? And will you quench the Spirit, and refrain from being virtuous, leſt men ſhould think you know your ſelf to be ſo? Eſpecially ſince our Ignorance in good Performances, tho it criminate the act, degrades the Agent from the Title of Virtuous: Virtue being a habitude elective, and election pre-requiring knowledge. Which reaſon I might fortify, by asking to what end Preachers ſhould light us ſo many Candles, and give us ſo many Touchſtones to diſcover and examine Graces with, if our being conſcious to our own Repentance were a fault that deſerved it? Undoubtedly, that were (and that were ſtrange) to make it our Duty to ſeek, what it were our Sin to find.

This

This laſt Reflection I muſt recruit, by adding, That ſince our improvement of, and thankfulneſs for Grace, will be expected proportionable to our ſtock of it, (as the Parable of the Talents, and our Saviour's declaring, that *where much is given, there alſo much will be required*, evinces) we cannot without the knowledge of our Receits, know what our Returns muſt be (of Gratitude and Duty) to be anſwerable to them. The utmoſt that Modeſty does exact of you, is the declining of thoſe Praiſes your actions do deſerve, not the refraining actions that deſerve Praiſe, for fear of being ſuſpected to affect it. But truly, Baſhfulneſs, tho in Maids thought a Virtue, in Virtue is a fault; for ſure it is one of the worſt Complements you can put upon the Spirit,

Spirit, to lock him up in a dungeon, for ſhame to own his Viſits.

The union betwixt Virtues is too ſtrict, and their aſſiſtances ſo reciprocal, that That may be concluded to be no Virtue, that forbids the exerciſe of any, and does not rather facilitate than obſtruct it. Certainly 'tis better be accuſed of Vanity, than guilty of Relapſes; and if ſome Reputation muſt be loſt, 'tis fitter that you ſhould be diſhonoured by other mens faults, than God by yours; for he is good enough to recompence his ſervants, not only for being good, but for their not being thought ſo for his ſake; and to make one day their Diſhonour (not only the Foil, but) the Purchaſe of their Glory. I have ſpent the more Ink to carry away this

this Obſtruction, becauſe I have obſerved it to be a Block, at which the beſt natur'd Novices in Piety are the moſt prone to ſtumble; the Devil, our ſubtle Antagoniſt, (more Serpent far than that he tempted our Firſt Parents in, when he inſinuated himſelf into our credulous Mother's eaſy Faith; in which ſly winding Creature, he elected not a fitter Inſtrument than Emblem) in the Scruple we have laboured to remove, leaving his own to aſſume the borrowed habit of an *Angel of Light*; in that Diſguiſe to make Virtue claſh with Grace, and pervert Modeſty into an Obſtacle of Reformation. Thus when Man was once fallen from Paradiſe, even Cherubims intercepted his return unto the *Tree of Life.*] Gen. 3.24.

The

The Laſt Excuſe.

Laſtly, (replies the Swearer) All this I confeſs to be very true; but what would you have me to do? Long time and cuſtom have ſo habituated me to this Vice, that I find the Impoſſibility of my ſubduing it, as great as my willingneſs to leave it.

Anſw. Well, I am very glad we have brought you to this paſs: 'Tis then confeſſedly a ſin, and a great one: The queſtion therefore is, Whether it be fitter for God to make it no ſin, or you not to make it yours; and for him to be reconcil'd to the evil of its nature, or for you to deſiſt from its practice? Your Apology is juſt as excuſing as the Murderer's would be, who ſhould alledge before his

his Judge, that ſince he had been a Murderer from his Youth, he begs to be excuſed; but truly for his part he could not help it, and he muſt needs continue the Trade of cutting of Throats, that he had ſo long practic'd. Is not yours a holy conſequence, I have been wicked long, therefore I will continue ſo ſtill? Sure 'tis the Devil's Logick, from thoſe ſins that evidence the Juſtice of our ſuddener Repentance, to infer the legitimateneſs of our Relapſes into Crimes. The Argument would have as much Reaſon, and more Honeſty, that concludes out of, I have been wicked but too long already; that, Therefore I muſt be ſo no more; and from our former want of Piety, infers there needs a greater meaſure now to make amends for paſt Omiſſions.

You would judge him uncharitable, that ſhould tell you that you are ſcarce ſo much as deſirous to be forgiven: But (to ſhew you how little you have for your opinion, beſides your wiſhes) conſider who would think that Delinquent very ambitious of Pardon, who refuſes to accept it, unleſs he may have licenſe to thieve again; and declines to purchaſe it by an engagement againſt former Miſdemeanors. Certainly,

Weak is th' Excuſe that is on Cuſtom built;
For th' Uſe of ſinning leſſens not the Guilt.

And Cuſtom in Evil rather increaſes than contracts the fault; for that Cuſtom that now is the Parent, was firſt the Child of Sin,

Sin, ſince the Evil of Cuſtom proceeds from the Cuſtom of Evil; (like Ice, which tho it eaſily thaw into Water, was firſt produced out of that Element's Congelation.) And therefore our equitable and impartial Laws, that in Theft chaſtiſe the firſt faults only with a Brand upon the Hand or Shoulder, puniſh Relapſes with deſerved Death.

Nor are the Obſtacles that oppoſe your cure, ſo ſtubborn as you are pleas'd to fancy them. We flatter our ſelves in augmenting the Difficulty of our Repentance, that we may leſſen the Guilt of our Neglects. The truth on't is, our baſeneſs adds dimenſions to theſe difficulties, becauſe we are really loath to forſake our ſins, and yet would fain cheat our Conſciences into a belief, that our re-

fractorineſs and impenitency do proceed, not from our unwillingneſs to mend, but from our impotence. We do not, in this caſe, like many flouriſhing Orators, who out of oſtentation uſe to create Monſters, afterwards to quell them; but like Children in the dark, who fancy firſt horrid miſhapen Bug-bears, and then are frighted by them.

And yet when the ſlight Penalty of a Shilling is laid upon each Oath, and ſtrictly exacted, we may eaſily diſcern a viſible abatement in the tale of your ſins, as long as you are true to your engagement; which were not moſt men too ſoon weary of, would (probably) ſoon make them weary of Offences of that nature.

'Tis

'Tis the opinion both of Pious and of Judicious Perſons, that Swearing is therefore, tho not the moſt unpardonable, at leaſt the moſt inexcuſable of Vices; becauſe that in it men have moſt power to refrain: And in effect, this ſin is ſo deſtitute both of Temptations, Advantages, and Apologies, that in ſubduing the Cuſtom of Swearing, we have ſcarce any thing but the Cuſtom to ſubdue. Try; 'tis leſs eaſy to ſurmount the belief of the difficulty, than the difficulty it ſelf, which nothing makes ſo much invincible, as our thinking that it is ſo.

Here, a willingneſs to hoiſe Sail (to quit this ruinous Vice) ſerves for a proſperous Gale. If therefore Chriſt by giving you a deſire to ſhake off the clogging Yoke

Yoke of Sin, do call you to himſelf, give me leave to ſay to you, as the people did to the blind man of *Jericho*, *Be of good comfort, riſe, he calleth thee.* And to compleat that comfort, I muſt tell you, that the Operation of Saving Grace upon the Sickneſſes of the Soul, is like that of the Pool of *Bethesda* upon the Infirmities of the Body, ſince without all regard either to the age or greatneſs of the diſeaſe, ſo the remedy be but duly applied, the Cure is infallible.

Mark 10. 49.

John 5. 2, 3, 4.

I ſhall never deſpair of the recovery of any, that is but heartily deſirous to be reclaim'd; ſince that which God was pleas'd to make me lately inſtrumental to work upon a Gentleman, whoſe Nation being *French*, his Vice little younger than himſelf, Humor

ex-

extremely Cholerick, and his apprehenſions of the Succeſsleſsneſs of his Endeavours very great, obliged him to vanquiſh Indiſpoſitions numerous and great enough to make that concurrence very frequent in one ſingle perſon; and yet before one Fortnight was effluxt, he obtain'd ſo viſible a Conqueſt over this ſtubborn Vice, that he had afterwards only as many relicks of it to ſuppreſs, as might keep him from growing proud of ſo ſudden a Recovery.

So eaſy is it after having vanquiſh'd the Imagination of the Difficulty, to overcome the Difficulty it ſelf; for in matter of uneaſy Chriſtian Duties, we muſt not only conſider the diſproportion of our Weakneſſes to the Obſtacles we muſt ſurmount, but allow the diſproportion of thoſe Ob-

Obſtacles, to the Supernatural Aſſiſtances we ought to hope for. For God requires nothing at our hands, which his own Favour (zealouſly implor'd by our addreſſes) will not enable us to execute. And in this, the Commands of God, differ from thoſe of men, that the latter but lay on us an Obligation, the former inveſt us with a Power to obey them. As when our Saviour commanded the ſick man (in the Goſpel) to *take up his bed, and walk*, at the ſame inſtant he ſtrengthens his Sinews to perform what he enjoin'd: And in the firſt Creation, that powerful Command, *Let there be light*, gave that bright Creature an Exiſtence, to make it capable of paying him an Obedience. Let not then Tasks above the forces of our Nature, diſ-

Mark 2. 9, 12.

Gen. 1. 3.

diſanimate thoſe that may expect aſſiſtances from his Almightineſs, who in the ſame Leaves where he commands us to perform more than we are able, promiſes to do in us what he commands; ſince difficulties are not eſſential properties of obſtacles, but only diſproportions to the powers they are to reſiſt. But admit that your habitude of ſwearing have rendred your Converſion as difficult as you pretend; ſure then, that which Cuſtom of ſinning has confeſſedly made ſo uneaſy, the continuance of that Cuſtom is very unlikely to facilitate: As probably may he, whom a Surfeit of Melons has caſt into a Fever, hope for a Cure by eating more again. No, no; remember that bad Cuſtoms, like Conſumptions, admit of Remedies in the begin-

ning, but grow still more incurable by delay; and Vices, like young Trees, the longer they are let grow, the greater difficulty there is in felling of them; each single sin being not bad only for the evil of the act, but the propensity it gives to repetition.

SECT.

SECT. II.

BUT becauſe to ſhew a ſinner the danger of his Diſeaſe, without preſcribing him the Remedies that may contribute to his Recovery, would be but to give him a perfecter knowledge of his wretchedneſs, and prove a Truth as uncomfortable to him as an *Ignis fatuus* to the benighted Traveller that has loſt his way, whoſe horrid light ſerves not to guide, but to affright the Wanderer: I think it not amiſs in the enſuing Directions to caſt the Swearer a few Cords, by which (if they be carefully laid hold on) he may happily be drawn out of that deep and dangerous Pit of Sin, into which his Negligence or his

Corruptions may have betray'd him. Nor let the courſeneſs of theſe home-ſpun Lines divert you from making them Inſtruments of your Reſcue; for Silk and Satten Ribbons, you know, are not ſo proper to draw men out of Pits, as homely Hempen Cords: Nor did the impriſon'd Prophet refuſe to be drawn up out of the Dungeon, tho by the help of *old caſt clouts and rags*: Since in caſes of this nature, 'tis not the Value nor the Fineneſs of the Inſtrument, but their Fitneſs for our Purpoſes, that we ought chiefly to regard. But to begin without more Circumſtance.

Jer. 28. 11, 12, 13.

DIRECT. I.

My firſt Advice ſhall be, Seriouſly to conſider, that Swearing is a Sin, and ſuch a Sin too, as not its

its Nature, but its Commoneſs only, makes men count little: For if we may judge of the greatneſs of the Crime, by that of the Vengeance Heaven inflicteth on it, certainly God has divers times ſo ſeverely puniſh'd obdurate and incorrigible Swearers, that were his Judgments on them as divulg'd as they have been terrible, that crying Sin would (poſſibly) be almoſt as unfrequent as it ought to be. Nor will the ſeeming harmleſsneſs of that act do more than make a parallel betwixt your fate, and that fond Wretches (mention'd in the Book of *Numbers*) that provok'd ſtoning, for gathering a few ſticks on the Sabbath-day. For tho Almighty God (whoſe Will is the exacteſt Rule of Good and Ill) ſhould forbid actions otherwiſe Innocent, yet

Numb. 15. 32.

his

his Prohibition diveſts them from that property: And (as the preceding Verſes of that Paſſage alledg'd of *Numbers* intimate) makes you liable to a juſt Puniſhment, tho not for the act, yet for the diſobedience. And conſonantly we find, that tho the killing of ſo horrid and Parricidicial a Murderer as *Cain*, might ſeem an Act of Juſtice, yet God by his prohibition having render'd it a ſin, annexes a Sevenfold Vengeance to the Breach of that Command.

Gen. 4.15.

Nay, tho the rebuilding of a ruin'd City be in it ſelf not only innocent, but highly conducing to the publick good; yet God (to ſhew the Independency of his Juſtice) having forbidden the reedification of *Jericho*'s raz'd Walls, puniſh'd the Tranſgreſſion of that Prophetick Order, in the very Chil-

Joſh. 6.26.

1 Kings 16. 34.

Children of the Transgressor. An Example of Severity very observable, being not, that I know of, to be parallel'd. Consider not therefore so much (in your Swearing) the little harm you do, as the great God you offend. False Coinage is as well Felony in Farthings, as in Half-Crowns, or Twenty-Shilling-Pieces. And as careful Mothers soundlier whip their Children for eating sowre Crabs, and such Green Trash, than ripe and goodly Fruit; so often are those sins most severely dealt with, which bring us least advantage; nor is it a Prodigy, to see men get most stripes for those offences they get least by.

It is an easy matter in trivial things to transgress heinously. What Trifle could appear slighter than the eating of an Apple? Yet this

this petty ſeeming Peccadillo loſt *Adam* Paradiſe, and us a Title to it: God's Interdict enabling the Core of that Forbidden Fruit to choak his Immortality, and his Poſterity's hopes of it upon earth. But I purpoſely decline all Inſtances of this nature, not only in purſuance of my intended Brevity, but becauſe 'tis much nobler and more handſom for you to owe your Repentance to your Reaſon, than to your Apprehenſion.

DIRECT. II.

In the next place I ſhall preſcribe, A Zealous and Inceſſant Sollicitation at the Throne of Grace, for Power to ſubdue this ſtubborn Vice. This Second Advice St. *James* ſeems to ſuggeſt to us in theſe words, *Reſiſt the devil, and he will flee from you*; and he immediately

James 4. 7, 8.

mediately adds theſe, *Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you.* And truly men preſume too much, when they imagine thoſe treacherous natural Forces of their own, are able to redeem that Spiritual Liberty they were unable to defend; and then they loſe their beſt advantages, when their omiſſions of applying themſelves to their Maker, makes them neglect Supplies infallibly victorious, which wait but the imploring, to advance to their reſcue. Ceaſe not then with *Moſes* to lift up your *hands* to Heaven, till you have thereby diſcomfited and deſtroy'd theſe ſpiritual *Amalekites*, your Vices: And believe it, Prayer (to uſe a Term of Phyſick) is a Specifick Remedy againſt this Diſeaſe, and deſerves that among all the Weapons proper

Exod. 13. 11, *&c.*

for this Warfare, you ſhould ſay that of it, that *David* ſaid of huge
1 Sam. 21. 9. *Goliah*'s Sword, *There is none like that, give it me.*

For Prayer perform'd with thoſe due Rites its Object requires in it, gives us ſuch awful ſentiments of God's Holy Name, that our Conſcience will not in a ſhort while after permit us to diſpenſe with the uſurping it in vain. And thus this ſacred Duty does not only procure, but in a manner give us what we pray for: As when ſome ſqueamiſh and diſreliſh'd perſon takes a long walk to the Phyſician's Lodging to beg ſome remedy for his Inappetence, his very walking thither does in ſome meaſure give him that good Stomach he hopes to regain by the Medicines he ſhall get there.

But

But if in your firſt attempts this Sin meet with a ſucceſs more anſwerable to your fears than your deſires, be not diſcourag'd at it, but make of this delay the uſe it is intended for, a Riſe of greater eagerneſs and importunity in the purſuit of your addreſſes. Nor think it ſtrange, that God ſhould make you wait a while for the grant of your requeſts, that have been ſo tediouſly refractory to the Motions of his Spirit, that ſummon'd your obedience to his commands. But loſe not Patience, for the wiſh'd ſupply will infallibly arrive at laſt, and all your expectation will but ſerve to endear it when receiv'd; for God will not be wanting with his Power to aſſiſt what is undertaken only for his Glory.

Nor is it leſs our duty to truſt in his Promiſes, than to obey his Commands; and we may confidently expect from his Faithfulneſs to the one, what he will enable our endeavours to perform the other. The great Apoſtle tells us, that the ſame God will give
Phil. 2.13. us *to will*, that *worketh in us to do*: And therefore you may be confident, that (as he elſewhere ſpeaks)
Phil. 1.6. *he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jeſus Chriſt.* And on this ſcore our Saviour, who entails happineſs only to the godly, does yet pronounce
Mat. 5.6. them *bleſſed, that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs*, promiſing that they ſhall be ſatisfied. Thus he that graciouſly *accepts the will for the deed*, counts good deſires but Infant Holineſs, as things that differ from more perfect Graces, not

in

in their Nature, but their (Age and) Growth.

In the mean time, let this Conſideration comfort you, That thoſe ſins diſpleaſe God leaſt, that diſpleaſe the Doer moſt: And that in this our Combats againſt ſins are differenc'd from our Battels amongſt men; that in the former the Victory depends not ſo much on our Succeſs as our Reſiſtance; ſince none are there held vanquiſh'd, but ſubmitters. And for your further comfort, you may take each Victory Grace wins of your Corruptions, not only for a Preparative to new ones, but an Earneſt of more. For the Conqueſts of Saving Grace in the Soul are not like thoſe the Sea makes upon the Strand, when it makes Acquiſitions by the Flow, but to loſe them again within few hours

hours by the Ebb: But the Expeditions of the Spirit against Vices, are like those of the Crown'd Rider of the White Horse in the Rev. 6. 2. *Revelation*, of whom it is said, That *he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*

DIRECT. III.

In the next place, as far as conveniency will permit, 'twere fit to fly the Conversation, or at least the Familiarity of profest Swearers. This Advice of declining Infectious Company, tho in a general Caution ever found prevalent against all Vices, has a peculiar property against this: For there being very small (if any) Temptation to it in our natures, it is principally imitated from others, (as when one yawns, most of the Company, though other-

otherwiſe uninclin'd to that act, do uſually yawn out of ſympathy) and ſo ſubſiſts but as 'tis cheriſh'd by Example and Cuſtom, (its Motive and its Nurſe). And therefore, a very effectual Remedy againſt Swearing, is by converſing where it is diſcountenanc'd; to ſtarve it by diſcontinuance, forcing that ſhame of ſingularity that firſt begot it, to make amends for the miſchief it has occaſion'd, by employing it to the ruin of its own Productions. As Phyſicians make Scorpions their own Antidote by preparing out of them an Oyl that is Sovereign againſt their Stings. Lovers of the ſame Sin, may (methinks) be reſembled unto Firebrands, which being laid together, kindle each other by their mutual heat; but being ſever'd and kept ſo aſunder,

ſunder, each ſingle Brand, after a little ſmoaking, does of it ſelf go out.

DIRECT. IV.

For the Fourth Remedy, I ſhould adviſe the Swearer to oblige himſelf to pay or ſuffer ſomewhat for every Oath he ſwears; thoſe little Forfeitures ſerving both as Monitors and as Penalties. But if the Bargain tye you to Pecuniary Diſburſements, be ſure diſtreſſed Chriſtians be (at leaſt) Sharers in them. For if (as Divines tell us) the Poor be God's Receivers, they ſeem to have a Title as well by Juſtice as by Charity, to the Amerciaments that are eſtreated upon Treſpaſſes againſt their Lord. But have a care you turn not this Phyſick into Poyſon, by imagining that when

when you have fin'd for your engagements, you have done Penance for your ſins; and by your Juſtice to your Compacts, cancell'd your Diſobedience to your Maker. No, no, God requires not that you ſhould part with your Sixpences, but with your Sins; and the Repentance he accepts, conſiſts not in a paying for, but in forſaking your Tranſgreſſions. Eſteem then theſe inconſiderable Mulcts but as Remembrancers of your Faults, not Satisfaction for them.

Ally'd to this Expedient is that uſeful one of procuring ſome diſcreet Friend, by putting you in mind of every Oath, to force you to take notice of your Faults; which this courſe will very much contribute to make you both wea-

ry and aſham'd of. Provided always, that theſe Reprehenſions be as well ſeaſonable as juſt; for to correct men in the firſt violent tranſports of their Choler, is by adminiſtring Phyſick in the extremity of the Fit, but to exaſperate inſtead of curing. Reaſon being to our Paſſions, as the Wind to the Fires; the ſame Puff that will blow out the Flames of a Candle, will but kindle thoſe that prey upon a Faggot. Reprehenſions may ſuppreſs Paſſions when they are weak, but do but incenſe them whilſt they are raging. 'Tis liſted amongſt the Miracles of Chriſt, that
Mat. 8. 26. he once chid a Storm into a Calm.

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DIRECT. V.

The Fifth thing that I muſt preſcribe our Swearer, is to reſolve at once to renounce that Vice, by a Deſertion not only ſincere, but unſuſpended and intire. Were it but one of theſe mere Moral Failings, whoſe Unfitneſs or Misbecomingneſs makes all the Guilt, I ſhould poſſibly counſel you to wean your ſelf of it by degrees, whoſe progreſs were ſcarce diſcernible before its end; juſt as Phyſicians uſe to reclaim thoſe that have been long accuſtomed to unwholſome Diet. But as the ſame Phyſicians, when once a dangerous Surfeit is contracted, reſtrain not by degrees, but totally and abruptly, thoſe Exceſſes that occaſion'd

caſion'd it, and whoſe continuance would prove fatal to the Patient; ſo Here, where that which is to be forſaken, is not ſo properly a Fault as a Sin, we muſt refrain without the leaſt Exception or Connivance; ſince elſe (the thing prohibited being in it ſelf a Sin) we allow our ſelves to offend God as much as ever, tho not ſo often; by committing the ſame Sins in Quality, however not in Multitude.

Indeed what is leſſen'd by the Number of our Oaths in this partial Reformation, is recompenc'd by the aggravated Heinouſneſs of their nature; thoſe that ſeem'd formerly but the ſlips of Infirmity, being now authoriz'd by Diſpenſation. This bare abatement of the Tale of our Sins is a good

good Refuge, but a bad Design: Many times this diminution is the utmost our Endeavours can arrive at; but then it ought to be practis'd, and not to be intended; for true Repentance, and a purpose of relapsing, are hugely inconsistent; the one not being real, without a property destructive to the other; since he but very lamely repents his Crimes, that resolves not against Relapses into the Crimes that he repents. No, no, this faint desisting from some acts of Vice, does but endear the rest that is unexil'd, and that importunately urge for the recalling of their banish'd Companions. This mild remisness, if it do not prune a Vice, at least it does but lop it; and that prohibits not its future growth; which

which the only way infalliby to prevent, is to dig it up by the Roots, with the Spade of an abſolute and irrevocable Reſolve, never to accord to our ſelves ſo much as by connivance, the leaſt Licenſe that may endanger a Relapſe. In this caſe, Extirpation is that alone which can ſecure our quiet; and the only way that leads to an eſtabliſh'd ſafety, is a ſeverity that its object ſecures from all poſſibility of exceſſes. A Sinner's condition may be reſembled to a Mouſe in a Pail of Water; if ſhe can get out at one leap, well and good, otherwiſe her toyl will prove but fruitleſs, in attempting to get out by degrees.

DIRECT. VI.

Laſtly, My concluding Precept is, To make frequent and ſerious Reflections upon the Vanity and Fooliſhneſs of Swearers, who live as if they meant to remove all our wonder from the Folly of our Firſt Parents, that loſt Paradiſe for an Apple. Sure that theſe people are not quarter'd in *Bedlam*, (where far leſs Frenzies have impriſon'd many) proceeds rather from the Multitude of the infatuated, than any want of Madneſs in their actions: But howſoever, wiſe men build Cages for them in their opinions, and in their ſoberer Thoughts condemn them to inhabit thoſe Frantick Lodgings.

That

Gen. 34.7. Joſh. 7.15. Judges 20.6. That uſual expreſſion of Scripture which ſometimes puts the word *Folly* inſtead of the word *Sin*, ſeems chiefly calculated for the Swearer's Vice, to which it does ſo eminently belong, and which is ſo uncapable of being wrong'd by the appellation.

But to what has been already delivered, to ſhew how little ſhelter our Swearers find from all their weak Apologies, (as certainly the Fruitleſneſs and Inexcuſableneſs of their Vice conſidered, almoſt no Sinners have more to anſwer for, and leſs to anſwer) we muſt now add, That they want not only the Temptation of an Excuſe, but the very Excuſe of a Temptation, (unleſs its being forbidden, paſs for one).

one). For (Firſt) this Mungrel Iſſue cannot (as other Vices uſe to be) be laid at Nature's door; we cannot father it upon Traduction, ſince we inherit it not from our Parents; nor is it born with us, but learn'd by us; ſo that here, before we can be Sinners, we muſt have been Diſciples. But (then) all other Vices have either Honour, (as Ambition), or Profit, (as Avarice), or Delight, (as Uncleanneſs), to plead for their excuſe; Swearing alone can plead nothing but Guilty: So that if ever that expreſſion of the Apoſtle, which mentions *Superfluity of Naughtineſs*, belong'd to any ſin, 'tis certainly here to be appropriated. Jam. 1.21.

The ſilly *Indians*, that part with Gold and Jewels, for Glaſſes,

Whiſtles, and ſuch trifling Gugaws, are *Solomons* to Swearers: Betwixt whoſe Madneſs, and the fam'd folly of *Lyſimachus*, who (parch'd with extreme Thirſt) to get a little drink, became a voluntary Priſoner to his (ſoon after vanquiſh'd) Enemies, I find no diſparity advantageous to Swearers; it being a leſs ill bargain, to ſell away ones Liberty for ones Belly-full of Water, than to ſell away ones Soul for a Mouth-full of Air. This Swearing is a Hook without a Bait: And when Hell employ'd its ſpurious brood of Vices into the world to ſeduce mankind, it furniſh'd every one of them with a Dowry, either of Fame, of Pleaſure, or Advantage, to entice Lovers with; only poor Swear-

Swearing was left Portionleſs; a Miſtreſs (only) for thoſe generous and diſintereſted Sinners, that need no Temptation; but loving Wickedneſs (as they ought to do Virtue) for its own ſake alone, aim'd at nothing in the act of ſin, beyond the ſatisfaction of having committed it. To whom the Lord may juſtly ſay, as he did to the *Iſraelites* in the Prophet, *You have ſold your ſelves for nought.* For whereas uſually thoſe Vices that rifle the Soul, do bribe the Senſes; in ſwearing the poor Soul is ſtript of her Graces, and robb'd of her Joys, without the leaſt Emolument (of Pleaſure or Advantage) accruing to the Senſes. This ſwearing (in my opinion) is e'en as fooliſh as loving a cruel Miſtreſs; a Isa. 52. 3.

man parts with his heart, and gets nothing in exchange for it. An Oath is like the Powder that charges a Granado, its properties are to make a momentary, diſpleaſing noiſe, to offend thoſe that are within the reach of it, and to ſpoil that from which it parts. Nor is that criminal blaſt unlike the Prophet's deſcription of the Cankerworm; of which he gives this Character, That *it ſpoileth, and fleeth away.*

Nahum 3. 16.

But the leſs advantages this Vice affords, the more culpable it is; the Diſobedience as well as Folly of a forbidden act being increaſed by the want of its being beneficial; he that treſpaſſes for leaſt, tranſgreſſes moſt; for ſure 'tis rather an aggravation than an excuſe

excuſe of having injured any body, that you get nothing by it. The Ambitious and the Incontinent, are like great Ladies, that ſurfeit upon Apricocks, Nectarines, and Melons: Whereas the Swearer is but too juſtly reſembled to thoſe Beggars, that kill themſelves with Blackberries and Slows, and ſuch like Traſh, the Excrements of Hedges; having Appetites as ridiculouſly noxious, as thoſe of ſome of our Green-ſickneſs Girls, whoſe Stomachs riſe at Dainties, and long for Loam and Charcoal.

For my part, would I renounce my intereſt in Virtue, it ſhould be for the attaining of a Scepter, a Fame tranſcending *Cæſars*; and (in a word) where the Happineſs I forfeited ſhould ſeem ſo recompenc'd

penc'd by that I gain'd by loſing it, that wiſe men themſelves ſhould have occaſion rather to compaſſionate my frailty, than admire my weakneſs. For I confeſs it would extremely trouble me to hang for my Thirteen-pence-half-penny; and I am confident, that many of thoſe this ſenſeleſs Vice has damn'd, do find a vaſt acceſſion to the Pains of Hell it ſelf, in the conſideration of the Cauſe of their enduring them.

Since then, Swearing is a Vice ſo ill qualified, that you want a Temptation to it, you find no Pleaſure in it, nor do derive any Advantage from it; O let not your obſtinacy to doat upon an empty fleeting ſound, that has nothing

nothing in it of a Sin, except the Guilt, hinder you from ſhunning Torments that will equal your Wretchedneſs to your Folly, and from keeping up a Title unto Joys, whoſe very Hope tranſcends all Earthly Happineſs, by oppoſing all your paſt Unneceſſary Oaths, by one Inviolable Promiſary One, *Never to Swear Needleſly again.*

Adver-

Advertiſement.

TO prevent all Miſtakes that may ariſe from ſome apprehenſions of mine, which (ſeeming to cenſure Oaths without diſtinction) may poſſibly be ſtretch'd beyond my meaning, I thought my ſelf oblig'd to declare, That in no part of this Diſcourſe my intention was to juſtify that plauſible Error of our Modern Anabaptiſts, that indiſcriminately condemn all Oaths as abſolutely and indiſpenſibly prohibited and aboliſhed by the Goſpel: My Deſign being only to reſtrain the Needleſs Abuſe, not interdict the Neceſſary Uſe of Swearing. Whoſe Criminouſneſs if not in this Diſcourſe I have repreſented in its moſt enlarged dimenſions, I may find an Excuſe in the Preſident and

Practice of those Painters, who being to draw upon the Concaves of the Roofs of Churches, make their Pictures more Gigantick than the Originals they are to resemble; to recompence by that advantage in the dimensions, what the eye loses by the distance from the object. For every Sinner naturally beholding Vice upon which he dotes, through the contracting Optick of Self-love, must have the Idea of his Crime enlarged beyond its true proportions, to make him see it in its just quantity. I might add, That 'tis scarce possible to paint this ugly **Negro** *in blacker Colours than his own; especially since now this Sin is grown so much in fashion, that it expects not (as most other Vices) slow time or years to ripen it; since in our very streets we hourly hear Children (who sure offer up Oaths as the First-Fruits to the Devil) swear, that can scarcely speak; and see them perfect in*

their

their Father's Language, before they are old enough to ſpeak their Mother-Tongue.

But tho in the heinous Properties of this Vice I might find cauſe enough to juſtify more fierceneſs than I have expreſt againſt it; yet ſhould I be extremely loth, with many (much better ſtor'd with Zeal than Charity) to doom all thoſe to Hell, that through frailty or temptation ſometimes let ſlip an Oath. For ſo ſevere a Sentence may perhaps concern too many, whoſe addictedneſs to other, not to greater ſins than ours, makes often all the difference of our Guilts: And who in ſpite of all their ſlips and ſtumbles by the way, may by Repentance arrive ſafely at the Heavenly Canaan: *And therefore I ſhall conclude what has been ſaid of Swearing, with this ſenſe of it, That 'tis a Sin too Heinous to excuſe Neglect, and too Venial (if I may ſo ſpeak) juſtly to beget Deſpair.*

A

DISSUASIVE

FROM

CURSING.

For Mr. *W. D.* to Sir *G. L.*

A

DISSUASIVE

FROM

CLERSING.

BY M. D. IN SEC. L.

A DISSUASIVE FROM CURSING.

For Mr. *W. D.* to Sir *G. L.*

SIR,

I Have too much Paſſion for your Perſon, to have any Complaiſance for your Faults; and ſtill have lov'd you at ſo high a rate, that I had rather hazard the Loſs of your Affection, than decline

decline any Proofs of the Reality of mine. 'Tis not that I am not as unwilling to employ Cenſure, as I am confident you will be troubled to have neceſſitated it from me; but (all conſider'd) I have too much Friendſhip, to have Courtſhip enough to let ſlip ſo fair an opportunity as your forc'd Converſation with *Cleander*, to ſhew you in him the Deformity of a Vice, from which I wiſh you were as free as from all other Crimes.

Certainly, if Curſes were as much the Badges of a Gentleman as he thinks them, men would not gueſs him to be of a lower Order than that of Emperors: And if the Devil were

to

to fetch all thoſe he bids him Take, his Water-Dog would not have half ſo buſy an Employment; Hell would have cauſe to praiſe his Liberality; and were not Satan ſtill *the Father of Lies*, he could not but acknowledge, That none of the Seven Deadly Sins, (nor perhaps all together) ſent thither half ſo many. If I thought *Cleander* would take it for a Diſſuaſion, that I proved Curſing to be a Sin, I could be as ready to bring Prohibitions of it out of Scripture, as he is to tranſgreſs them. The Prophet *David* (imitated by the Apoſtle *Paul*) makes it the Character of the wicked, That *his mouth is full of curſing*. And in another place, That *they curſe inwardly*.

Pſal. 10.7. Rom. 3. 14. Pſal. 62.4.

And ſuitably to his own Do-
2 Sam. 16. 5. & 13. ctrine, when *Shimei* (equalling his Curſes to the Number of his ſteps) rail'd at him with as many Imprecations as he deſerved Bleſſings, he did not (to
1 Pet. 3. 9. ſpeak St. *Peter*'s Language) render *evil for evil, or railing for railing*; but only anſwers, *Let*
2 Sam. 16. 11, 12. *him curſe, it may be the Lord will look upon mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his curſing this day.* Our Saviour
Mat. 5. 44. commands us to *bleſs* even *thoſe that curſe* us; nay, *bleſs them that*
Rom. 12. 14. *perſecute you. Bleſs* (ſays St. *Paul*) *and curſe not.* And to ſhew you that it was not only his Precept but his Practice, *being reviled* (ſays he) *we bleſs; being perſe-*
1 Cor. 4. 12, 13. *cuted we ſuffer it; being defam'd we intreat.* Imagine then you hear

hear the Apoſtle ſaying, as in one place he does, *Be ye followers of me, as I alſo am of Chriſt;* who (ſays another Apoſtle) *when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatned not, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.* And in effect, when upon the *Samaritan* Clowns refuſal to receive Chriſt, the two Fiery-ſpirited Diſciples deſired leave to call down Fire from Heaven (to conſume thoſe by the Fury of that active Element, who refus'd Entertainment to him that created it) our Saviour anſwers, but with a Rebuke, and telling them, That they *knew not what manner of ſpirit they were of.*

1 Cor. 11: 1.

1 Pet. 2. 23.

Luke 9. 54, 55.

If then, in ſpite of Provocations we are enjoin'd to return

Prayers for Maledictions, ſure we that are forbidden to retribute Curſes, are much more prohibited to laviſh them. And if we will take the pains to ſhrive, and to look back into their Pedigree, we may diſcern in them a Hereditary Guiltineſs, and ſhall find them ſinful (if I may ſo ſpeak) by Traduction, they being but the Emanations and Sallies of a Temper extremely unconſonant to Chriſtianity; of which our Saviour makes *Love* the diſtinguiſhing Signature: And St. *Paul* tells us, That *the end of the commandment is charity.* Of which in another place he gives this Character, That *Charity ſuffereth long, and is kind; doth not behave it ſelf unſeemly, beareth all things, is not eaſily provok'd;* with many

John 13. 35.

1 Tim. 1. 5.

1 Cor. 13. 4, &c.

many other properties of the ſame nature. Inſomuch, that St. *John* ſcruples not to affirm, that if a *man ſay, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a lyar*; (as concorporating things inconſiſtent, and uniting things diſtanter than the two Poles of Heaven): And therefore when St. *James*, ſpeaking of the Tongue with a certain kind of wonder, in theſe terms, *Therewith bleſs we God, even the father; and therewith curſe we men that are made after the ſimilitude of God: Out of the ſame mouth proceedeth bleſſing and curſing*; he adds, *My brethren theſe things ought not ſo to be.* And ſurely too, the Goſpel teaches us, that theſe Aſſaſſinates and Murders of the Heart, for being Bloodleſs are not therefore Guiltleſs. But

1 John 4. 20.

James 3. 9, 10.

But granting the ſin to be as venial as indeed 'tis heinous; (and that by uſing Curſes men did not merit them) yet certainly the Multitude of *Cleander*'s Faults would give them that Danger that is pretended to be wanting to their Nature; and he that conſiders that thoſe little drops of Rain, which ſingle ſeem but ſo many Liquid Atoms, do often (united by their Confluence) ſwell into Torrents, nay, (ſometimes) into Deluges, will eaſily believe that Curſes cannot but be extremely criminal in that *Cleander*, that curſes as if he were an Inhabitant of Mount *Ebal*; and who is ſo reſolved not to keep the Devil's Counſel by concealing any impious ſuggeſtions, that were but his

Deut. 11. 29.

Prayers

Prayers as frequent as his Curſes, he would ſeem to obey literally that qualified Injunction of the Apoſtle, of *praying without ceaſing*. 1 Theſ. 5. 17.

I might add, that in moſt of theſe Imprecations, God's Sacred Name being clearly taken in vain, renders theſe *Ebalites* guilty of the breach as well of the Second Commandment of the Firſt, as of the great Commandment of the Second Table; unleſs they will juſtify themſelves from that Crime, by the owning of a worſe; I mean, demonſtrate, That they did not employ God's Name to no purpoſe, by confeſſing they employ'd it to a bad one.

And now this laſt Conſideration leads me to that of the Unreaſonableneſs of Curſing; For it is not a fit thing, that upon

upon every little Accident that *Cleander*'s vex'd at, the Creatures of God muſt inſtantly change Maſters, and devolve to the Devil. Were it not very juſt, that God ſhould be the Executioner of all the raſh Decrees his pettiſh Paſſion makes; and his Creator's Power ſhould have no other Employment, but to run on Errands (at the Moody Gentleman's beck) often repugnant to his Juſtice, and ever to his Mercy?

Nay, how often has *Cleander* in his Paſſion wiſh'd things, whoſe Accompliſhment himſelf confeſſes would have made him miſerable? And is it then either the part of a Good Man to make Wiſhes that are unlawful, or for a Wiſe Man to frame Deſires of which

which he need repent the Grant? One Imprecation amongſt the reſt *Cleander*'s very ready in, which (with as little Caution as he commonly obſerves) I would not have pronounc'd for as many Kingdoms as he has us'd it times, and that's, *The Devil take me.* For ſhould God (as we are ſure he may, and know not but that he will) give the Devil leave to take him at his word, in what a caſe were he? And what Curb ſhall we henceforward think ſtrong enough to bridle his Corruption, when what to the wickedeſt is the greateſt Terror, he makes his wiſh?

There was ſome years ſince in *Geneva*, an *Italian*, (both by Extraction and Humour) who

riding a handſome Mare in a ſolitary Angle, was by the Devil ſeduc'd to ſtallion her himſelf. The Fact once done, the Horror of a Crime that made him more a Beaſt than that on which he acted it, tranſported him ſo far, as to make him give himſelf to the Devil, if ever after he relaps'd: But ſome while after, forgetting both his Conſcience, and the condition of his Vow, he was fatally tempted to repeat his former Beaſtlineſs in the ſelf-ſame place; which he had ſcarce compleated, before the Devil appearing to him viſibly, remembers him of his forgotten Promiſe, and claims the Forfeiture: The trembling Wretch, to avoid the being hurried away inſtantly from the Hell he felt,

to

to that he fear'd, compounds with the Devil to reſign him his Soul at the expiration of a limited Reprieve: But before that time came to be effluxt, it pleaſed God to viſit both himſelf and the place of his Reſidence with the Plague; which rowzing his ſear'd and lethargick Conſcience, forc'd him to expreſſions of his Anguiſh unuſual enough to make his Companions inquiſitive into the Cauſe; which having fully and circumſtantially confeſt, he was after his Recovery, upon that Evidence, accus'd of having carnally abus'd a Beaſt, and having made a Compact with the Devil; which latter, though upon a Repentance ſuitable to his Sin, God's Mercy did diſannul, yet the Juſtice of

the Magiſtrate did for the former Crime condemn him to a Death he richly had deſerved, and penitently endured. This Story I thought not impertinent to inſtance in, to teach us how dangerous and unſafe it is to preſent that to the Devil, for which Chriſt ſhed his Blood; and (with more warineſs than *Cleander* can pretend to) to offer that to one that is greedy to ſnatch (and therefore ſurely willing to accept) that which the whole buſineſs of Religion is to defend and reſcue from his Attempts. The Story it ſelf may teach us, that though we are never to deſpair of God's Mercy, we are as ſeldom to provoke his Juſtice. I have given it you in the very Words of our Friend Mr. *Boyle*, who had it upon

on the place from an excellent Divine of that Republick; to whom the Delinquent himſelf confeſt it, as to him that was aſſign'd to comfort and aſſiſt him at his Death. And the Inſtances are not unfrequent in the moſt credited Authors, of thoſe whoſe Imprecations God has puniſh'd by granting them.

But I had almoſt forgot to mention one opportunity to which the Devil is indebted for a vaſt number of *Cleander*'s Curſes, and that's his Gaming; for the leaſt Frown of Chance upon him then, gives Fire to whole Volleys of Curſes againſt Fortune; if at leaſt they deſerve not a more heinous Title than barely that of Curſes, who in ſeverer mens Opinions are

are guilty of an (at leaſt) Im-
Prov. 16. 33. plicite Blaſpheming; ſince *Solomon* does diſcreetly affirm, That all theſe croſs and happy Lucks at Play are not raſhly or deſignleſly ſhuffled by a blind Hazard, but are diſpenſed by an All-ruling Providence.

I determine not here, Whether theſe Words of the Wiſe Man (according to the receiv'd Opinion of Divines) may be extended to an abſolute Sentence of Condemnation againſt all Games of Hazard; but this I know, that (not to inſiſt on that Injunction of God to the *Jews*, *Be circumſpect, and make no mention of the names of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth*;) it is very unfit that under the Sunſhine of Chriſtiani-
Exod. 23: 13.

ty,

ty, we ſhould build or repair the ruin'd Altars of depos'd Chance, and acknowledge a blind Deity; that under the abuſed name of Fortune, Fools anciently were pleas'd to create a Goddeſs, and ſinners now diſſemble to miſtake for ſome ſuch thing, that they may unreproved controul and cenſure thoſe Heavenly Diſpenſations their proud and peeviſh natures are diſpleaſed with. I know that many unforeſeen Accidents, which the Ignorant Vulgar do impute to Fortune, are by God in the Scriptures aſcribed to Providence: And therefore you muſt give me leave, both to take notice of, and diſapprove that ungrateful expreſſion of our Language, wherein (to juſtify our Unthankfulneſs for the Benefits

we

we have received) we uſe to call God's Bleſſing to a man in his outward Poſſeſſions, his *Fortune*; as if our Eſtates were Gifts blindly caſt on us by the raſh Profuſeneſs of that fond Deity, and not the Emanations of God's Bounty, and Preſents of his Providence. Old *Jacob's* Gratitude ſpeaketh another ſtrain, and will not mention his Wealth (though never ſo juſtly the Wages of his proſper'd Induſtry) without acknowledging it for the Gift of God.

Gen. 33. 11, & 5.

But ſince this much-abuſed Name of Fortune has preſented it ſelf in my way, I dare not take leave of it, till I have expreſs'd a deſire that men would be more wary how they defame her, leſt through the ſides of Fortune they affront

affront Providence. If Fortune under the common Notion, had fee'd me to be her Advocate; I ſhould alledge, That Gameſters of all others, have the leaſt Juſtice to complain of her Diſfavours, ſince the Succeſs of the one abſolutely depending upon the Loſſes of the other, they themſelves reduce Fortune to a Neceſſity of diſobliging ſome of them, by rendring it impoſſible for her to content them all. And I would add, That what we fondly call her Inconſtancy, when ſhe ſometimes forſakes thoſe ſhe once ſmil'd on, is much more properly to be aſcribed to the Juſtice of her Goodneſs, and the Extenſiveneſs of her Affection to men; ſince ſeeing ſhe is not able to make them all compleatly happy at

once, at leaſt ſhe endeavours to make them fortunate by turns, and for ſome Intervals of time.

Nor is it her Fickleneſs, that in purſuance of this impartial Love ſhe ſeems to deſert her former Favourites, when ſhe confers her Favours on new Perſons, ſince ſhe bereaves not the firſt poſſeſſors of them with intention, but only by conſequent; as being not able to lend her benefits to new Neceſſities, without redemanding them of her former Debtors; whom, otherwiſe, ſhe has as little deſign to offend by this tranſplacing of her bounties, as the Sun has to benight the Antipodes, when to bring Light into our Hemiſphere he is neceſſitated to leave them in darkneſs.

'Tis

'Tis not the malice or inſtability of Fortune, but our miſtakes of the nature of her Preſents, that occaſion our Complaints; for we miſtaking thoſe Benefits for abſolutely given to us, which are indeed but depoſited in our hands, repine and murmur at their reſtitution, inſtead of being thankful for their Loan, and having had their uſe. And ſurely they that pretend to be ſo perfect in her inconſtancy, muſt be guilty of more madneſs in truſting her, than ſhe can be of treachery in deceiving them.

But were I to frame an Apology to vindicate Fortune under the notion of Providence, I might repreſent, that what we attribute of her envious partiality, when ſhe does ſhower moſt Favours on

thoſe that leaſt deſerve them, is but the effect of God's immenſer Bounty, that gives even them a larger portion of Pleaſures in this life, to whom he reſerves none at all in the next; and withal caſts a diſeſteem upon theſe glittering Goods, Fools over-value, by heaping them upon his very Enemies.

I might farther alledge, That what our diſcontents, call Fortune's Spitefulneſs, and her Injuſtice, when ſhe ſeems to perſecute thoſe moſt, that are moſt Virtuous, is in effect but God's Care of his Children, which by theſe Afflictions both Exerciſes and improves their Piety, ſecures them from the Allurements of Proſperity, endears his Aſſiſtances and his Recompences by theſe difficulties;

difficulties; which both add Luſtre to their Victories, and make their Vertues more Exemplary and more Meritorious.

And (Laſtly) I might ſay, That what we miſcall Inconſtancy in Fortune, when her Changes invalidate the title of Preſcription to her Favours, and make their reſidence (when poſſeſs'd) as incertain as their wiſh'd ſtay is welcome; is indeed but a merciful ſtratagem of Providence, to wean us from a dangerous fondneſs of theſe tranſitory Goods; leſt if the continuance of their fruition were as certain as the contentments of it are great, we ſhould by neglecting forfeit all nobler joys, and loſe far greater Pleaſures reſerved for us in Heaven.

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But we have too long wandered from our Theme; let us return to *Cleander* and his Curſing; which over and above thoſe other good qualities we have already obſerv'd in it, has that of being a Sin as uſeleſs as it is Unchriſtian. All other Vices have ſomething to extenuate their Guilt; all other Sinners ſerve Satan for his Pay; but the Curſer, (as the Swearer) is the Devil's Volunteer, valuing his Soul ſo cheaply, that ſome ſuſpect, that the reaſon of its ſtay in the Body, is, that the Devil ſcarce thinks it worth the fetching: And certainly, *Eſau*'s Bargain, who ſold his Birth-right for a Meſs of Pottage, becomes no more abſurd when parallell'd to this; which makes thoſe it Damns as much admir'd for their folly,

Gen. 25. 33.

folly, as tormented for their ſins; and ſo caſts upon them the imputation of Madneſs, that it deprives them of the privilege of Mad-men; for whereas Frantick Perſons (who innocently act all Crimes) may Kill men without Murther, the Curſer (on the other ſide) does Murther without Killing.

Cleander may indeed give himſelf to the Devil by his Curſes, but never his Enemy; for if *Solomon*'s Authority be credited in this point, we ſhall believe that, *as the bird by wandering, as the ſwallow by flying, ſo the curſe cauſleſs ſhall not come.* Prov. 26. 2. But the beſt on't is, that theſe Intentional Sins, for being ineffectual againſt others, diveſt not the being criminal in themſelves: For the Curſer is as uncharitable

thoſe that leaſt deſerve them, is but the effect of God's immenſer Bounty, that gives even them a larger portion of Pleaſures in this life, to whom he reſerves none at all in the next; and withal caſts a diſeſteem upon theſe glittering Goods, Fools over-value, by heaping them upon his very Enemies.

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But we have too long wandered from our Theme; let us return to *Cleander* and his Curſing; which over and above thoſe other good qualities we have already obſerv'd in it, has that of being a Sin as uſeleſs as it is Unchriſtian. All other Vices have ſomething to extenuate their Guilt; all other Sinners ſerve Satan for his Pay; but the Curſer, (as the Swearer) is the Devil's Volunteer, valuing his Soul ſo cheaply, that ſome ſuſpect, that the reaſon of its ſtay in the Body, is, that the Devil ſcarce thinks it worth the fetching: And certainly, *Eſau*'s Bargain, who ſold his Birth-right for a Meſs of Pottage, becomes no more abſurd when parallell'd to this; which makes thoſe it Damns as much admir'd for their folly,

Gen. 25. 33.

folly, as tormented for their ſins; and ſo caſts upon them the imputation of Madneſs, that it deprives them of the privilege of Mad-men; for whereas Frantick Perſons (who innocently act all Crimes) may Kill men without Murther, the Curſer (on the other ſide) does Murther without Killing.

Cleander may indeed give himſelf to the Devil by his Curſes, but never his Enemy; for if *Solomon's* Authority be credited in this point, we ſhall believe that, *as the bird by wandering, as the ſwallow by flying, ſo the curſe cauſleſs ſhall not come.* Prov. 26. 2. But the beſt on't is, that theſe Intentional Sins, for being ineffectual againſt others, diveſt not the being criminal in themſelves: For the Curſer is as uncharitable

charitable to himſelf as to his Enemies; he commits Murders without acting them; and contracts the Guilt of his Neighbours Blood, without ſhedding it; and incurs the Penalty, without once taſting the Sweetneſs of Revenge. For 'tis not only in Good that God accepts the Will for the Deed; he makes the ſame reception to our Endeavours and Deſigns of Ill. And juſtly may God puniſh the Ill by us intended, tho by him prevented, ſince that diſappointment in which we think to find our juſtification, is not the effect of our want of Malice, but our want of Power, and ſo does not excuſe our Ill, but magnifies God's Goodneſs. Let us therefore ceaſe to wonder, that whilſt we curſe one another, our Maker curſes us;

us; and that the Plague is ſo raging in our Houſes, ſo long as it is ſo rife in our Mouths: But rather let us tremble at that diſmal Fate, that *David* praying againſt his Enemies, Prophecies againſt God's. *As he loved Curſing* (ſays he) *ſo let it come unto him: as he delighted not in Bleſſing, ſo let it be far from him: As he Cloathed himſelf with* Curſing, *like as with his Garment, So let it come into his Bowels like Water, and like Oil into his Bones.* Pſal. 109. 17, 18.

I might yet further alledge, That Curſes are of ſo culpable a Nature, that their very Apology concludes them Guilty, by Pleading them to be Idle Words: And I might add to all the paſt Diſſuaſives, The Ill Repute that Curſes gain a man, amongſt the moſt Scrupulous and Preciſer ſort Matt. 12. 36.

of People, who judging of the greatneſs of the Vice, by the ſmallneſs of the Advantage that is derivable from it, will hardly believe him to be the owner of much Piety, that will Slight it upon ſo little a Temptation. And thoſe of our Divines that hold Curſes to be the Dialect of the Reprobates in Hell, will think it but an ominous Piece of Providence in *Cleander* to imitate Travellers, who uſe to accuſtom themſelves before-hand to the Language of thoſe Climes they deſign to Viſit. But the laſt Conſideration that I ſhall employ to perſuade you to diveſt, with the Practice of uſing Curſes, the means of Provoking them, and the Fears of ſufferiug them; is that of the ſcandal this vicious Cuſtom gives to weaker Chriſtians. And as the

the former Conſiderations relate properly to *Cleander*, ſo this I muſt more peculiarly addreſs to You, whoſe Vertues have acquir'd you ſo high a Reverence, that they have put it in your Power, not only to excuſe, but almoſt to Canonize the worſt Actions by your Example; and therefore ought to make you ſo much the more Wary and Strict in your Behaviour: Since men believing it impoſſible to fail in imitating you, your Exemplary Faults will contract a deeper Guilt by being Preſidents, than by being Sins.

But, Sir, leſt I ſhould give you too Juſt an occaſion to encreaſe the number of your Curſes, by beſtowing ſome freſh ones upon my tediouſneſs, I will now put a Period to your trouble, by ſaying to you as once our Saviour did to the young

young man in the Goſpel, (that ſo reſembled you in the Poſſeſſion of ſo many Vertues) *One thing thou lackeſt* (yet); and that one thing in you is but, by Sacrificing your Habitude of Curſing, to make your ſelf capable of as tranſcendent Bleſſings as conſtantly are implor'd for you, by

Mat. 10. 21.

SIR,

Your moſt Affectionate, moſt Faithful, and moſt Humble Servant,

W. D.

ERRATA.

PAge 3. l. 8. read *Wiſe Man.* P. 127. l. ult. r. *Promiſſory.*

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